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THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

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CONTULI

PREFACE

The following Essays, with the exception of the last, are reprints of, or are based upon, contributions to religious thought which the author has published at various times during the last ten years. They are now brought together because experience has shown that they have a value which is more than merely transient, and because together they illustrate, explain, and defend a new and wider and deeper interpretation which the author believes must be given to a well-known doctrine—that the truth of religion must be based directly on actual experience.

The first, second, and third Essays are concerned with fundamental doubts and difficulties whose shadow darkens the way of faith to-day as never before. The author is convinced that in the treatment of such subjects it is possible to be simple, concrete, and human, without any loss of thoroughness or penetration. The fourth, fifth, and sixth Essays deal with fundamental principles in a personal setting, and almost from a comparative point of view. Athanasius, in his great struggle in the fourth century to establish the idea and ideal of Divine Sonship as the distinctive contribution of Christianity to Religion and Theology, Newman and Martineau in the nineteenth century—the one an ideal representative of the Religion of Authority, the other, of the Religion of Reason—all alike teach us to recognize the same religious issues under the widest diversity of expression; and their work is as rich in impressive warnings as it is in stimulation and guidance for rightly handling the experiential interpretation of Religion.

The seventh Essay was written for this book. It

investigates the meaning and possibilities of religious Symbolism, and leads to the conclusion that the experiential interpretation of Religion necessarily involves Symbolism. A concise statement of this interpretation of Religion in the present Preface may be useful to some readers.

Experience is at once the presence of Reality to us and its actual contact with us through our reaction on it. It is therefore no fixed, finite thing, but a seed, a germ, a potency; it may be almost infinitely magnified in capacity and character, in intensity and scope. The type of experience which a man will have depends on the direction of his own activities and the intensity with which he puts forth the native energies of his spirit into those activities. By this effort and energy his very personality will grow in power as his experience grows in depth of meaning: but in order that experience may teach us anything it must be *thought* about; and as human intelligence has in itself endless varieties of maturity and power, this adds a new set of variations to experience. *Plus l'homme a su, plus il a pu ; mais aussi moins il a fait, moins il a su.*

Amid all this complexity and manifoldness of experience, where is the Real Presence of God? Belief in God is more than belief in "the Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed" and of which no positive qualities can be affirmed. Our knowledge of God is based on the distinctive feature of human nature as contrasted with animal nature: the perpetual presence of Ideals claiming to be embodied in the work of life. These are our highest symbols of the Divine. God is the Goodness in all that is good, the Beauty in all that is beautiful, the Truth in all that is true.

Our experience points to a Supreme Ideal, in itself the everlasting Real, germinally present in every

individual, and becoming increasingly manifest in the human race as the guide and sustainer of its higher life. This is at once the Divine quality of Man and the Human quality of God. On the one side, we emphasize its relation to the historic forms of human life as an inter-personal redeeming power; on the other, its relation to the Unseen and the Eternal, its source in the deep things of God. On the one side, we find it shown forth in the great souls of history, and above all in the Master Jesus; on the other, we regard it as the self-revelation of that Infinite and Eternal Life whom no historic life can ever fully express.

In reference to the contents of the present volume, it only remains to say that acknowledgments are due to the Editor of *The Hibbert Journal* for permission to reprint the first and third Essays, and to the Editor of *The Inquirer* for permission to reprint the fourth. The second Essay is based on an Address revised and expanded in the light of thorough discussions with more than one thoughtful audience. The fifth and sixth Essays consist of the essential parts of two chapters in a book entitled *Leaders of Religious Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, now out of print. The author desires to acknowledge indebtedness to personal discussion of the subject of the seventh Essay with Dr. L. P. Jacks, Editor of *The Hibbert Journal* and Principal of Manchester College, Oxford; and to the Rev. R. Nicol Cross, M.A., of Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead, who read most of the manuscript and made helpful suggestions. For the contents of the Essay as it stands, the author alone is responsible.

S. H. MELLONE.

LONDON,

October, 1924.

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Plus l'homme a su, plus il a pu; mais aussi moins
il a fait, moins il a su.

Buffon.

I.

THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

SUMMARY

I. Progress is not a gradual accumulation of increments of advance through the ages, completing itself in a certain form of specifically earthly life.

II. Nevertheless the enlargement of knowledge, and extension and improvement of the instruments of humane living, and above all the admitted widening and deepening of moral ideals, does actually imply and spring from an improvement in human nature.

III. We need a vision of the immeasurable labour and suffering through which these material and moral gains have been won.

IV. What is to be the reaction of the modern spirit to the vision of this background ?

THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

A WELL-KNOWN writer of our own day has worked out in highly imaginative form a scientific romance based on the idea that this earth was invaded by creatures from another planet—beings who were possessed of scientific and mechanical resources incomparably greater than ours, who were able by means of these resources to project themselves through space on to our planet to find fields for further development here, and who were prepared to treat the human race as so much dust to be cleared out of their way. The closing scenes reveal a genuine touch of genius on the writer's part. One thing these invaders, great as their knowledge was, had not reckoned with—those invisible germs of disease which have taken toll of humanity, and of our pre-human ancestors, since life began. By virtue of the natural selection of our kind, we have developed resisting power: to no germs do we succumb without a struggle: to many, our human frames are altogether immune. But directly the invaders from another world arrived, these microscopic allies began to

work their overthrow. The moment they entered our atmosphere they were doomed; and at length they perished miserably through a death to them utterly mysterious and inexplicable. "Thus," says Mr. Wells, "by the toll of a million million deaths, man has bought his birthright of this earth, and it is his against all comers. For neither do men live nor die in vain."¹

This struggle for bodily immunity is a parable. The Dean of St. Paul's observed in his Romanes Lecture that the microbe which had the honour of killing Alexander the Great at the age of thirty-two, and so changing the course of history, still survives and flourishes. That may be so; none the less, the struggle for bodily immunity has not been in vain. It has always been going on; it is in process now, and "by the toll of a million million deaths" partial success has been secured. It is, I repeat, a parable of the upward struggle of man in all things, and not least in the things of the mind and the spirit. Our race has achieved plain and tangible moral and spiritual as well as material gains. The problem lies not in the admission of the fact, but in the consciousness of what it implies. The consciousness of the immeasurable hardship and suffering, through which these things have been secured, has penetrated the thought

¹ H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*, London, 1906, chapter viii.

and feeling of humanity to-day as it never did before.

I.

We have said in effect that the fact of Progress is beyond dispute. It is necessary, however, to indicate precisely what is affirmed and what is denied by this statement; and we have referred to a powerful address given by a brilliant thinker and keen critic of his age, in which *The Idea of Progress* is subjected to a merciless analysis which was much needed.¹

The aspect of the question raised by Dr. Inge is not the same when we look at it from the point of view which faces the future, and when we look at it from the point of view which faces the past. If we accept as sufficient an ideal of progress which makes it consist of a gradual accumulation of small increments of advance through the ages, completing itself in a certain form of specifically earthly life, then we are not only untrue to the mind of the Founder of Christianity, but also untrue to the inexorable logic of history and fact. History tells of victories that were defeats, of defeats that were victories. The Cross on Calvary, the death-agony of the secular power of Rome, the fierce life begotten by the young Northern nations over the ruins of the ancient

¹ Romanes Lecture, Oxford, 27th May, 1920, by W. R. Inge, C.V.O., D.D., Hon. Fellow of Hertford College.

world, the resurrection, as from the grave, of the spirit of that old world with power to mould in countless ways the mind and heart of the new—these things are not exceptional, but typical of the stuff of which “progress” is made. And through it all there sounds the message of the Master, that the issue of all these ages of storm and stress cannot be found on the field of time.

The various Utopias, from the pictorial visions of the sixteenth century to the ideal constructions characteristic of some kinds of nineteenth-century socialism, are indications of a conviction that a perfect state and a perfect social order are conceivable, that their general structure can be imagined, and that they are consistent with human nature as realized on this earth. The goal is an earthly civilization, based on scientific knowledge, and secured by perfect political institutions. Crudely conceived, as it often is, this becomes a purblind faith in man as a “progressive animal” whose progress is essentially a thing of years. In a thousand years, for example, he will have made a great advance over his present state. And in a million years, mental and physical facts will be so organized that no one will have any experience of pain or evil. It may be freely admitted that in such ideas there is something which calls for sympathy; at the same time it must be affirmed that they are destitute of any basis in our knowledge of

the actual or the possible. But what exactly does this admission imply ?

We admit that the reformer may be defined as one who creates the problems of the future by endeavouring to solve the problems of the present. We may even admit that every reform undertaken by man is a desperate venture: that the future of mankind on this earth is encumbered with darkness: that no faculty of calculation we possess, no instrument we are likely to invent, will enable us to map out its course or penetrate the secret of its destiny. But these seemingly gloomy admissions are only another way of stating the obvious fact that our human powers of insight and foresight are limited. And legislation and political action, even when moving in the light of the most assured results of sociological investigation, must necessarily move largely in theoretical uncertainty and deal with the practical problems one by one as they arise.

The main force of Dr. Inge's argument confessedly relates to the past; and the importance of his warning seems to us to lie in its emphasis on the fundamental fact, namely that the *things* by which men usually estimate progress are at once *the creation and the tools* of the spirit which uses them, and therefore that real progress must be spiritual progress.

The secular tendency—weakened, indeed, by the experiences of the war—to identify

Progress with the advance of Science, is a dangerous delusion. Science consists in the discovery of what exists; she seeks to go on adding fact to fact for ever, connecting them into a vast system to which no limit can be imagined or conceived. What, then, can Science do for us? The answer is threefold. She can, and she actually has, set the human mind free from an accumulation of superstition (though even this, if done too hastily, may be a doubtful benefit);¹ she can also proceed to an ever more victorious ascertainment of fact upon fact; and above all she can provide mankind with the means of realizing all kinds of human purposes. But she can supply no clue for estimating the value of the purposes which she may serve.

Hence the fallacy of assuming as "scientific facts" that, for example, the process of natural evolution is good, or the stability of society good, or the increase of human life good, or the happiness of the greatest number good. Good means good for some kind of human purpose. Science is limited to the ascertainment of what *is*; and human purposes deal with what *is to be*, and introduce us to the world of what *ought to be*. If we widen the meaning of the word "Science"—or rather, change its meaning—and make it mean systematic knowledge in the widest sense, then we may inquire into the possibility

¹ See Sir J. G. Frazer in *Psyche's Task*.

of gaining "systematic knowledge" of what ought to be; but that would be quite a different question.

II

When all this is said, however, and due allowance made for whatever truth it may contain, there remains a question which does not appear to be adequately met by Dr. Inge's argument. Let us turn to Friedländer's *Sittengeschichte Roms*, allowing for the occasional tendency, even in this classical work, to blacken what was dark and darken what was grey. We are shown an appalling panorama of a dying civilisation. Outwardly, there is wealth and power, splendour and greatness; inwardly, there is emptiness and desolation. Along with increasingly successful achievements in the externals of the structure of civilization—political organization, public finance, criminal justice, roads and transport, and the like—we find a deep disillusionment and despondency taking hold of the mind of the Empire. All thoughtful men were labouring to find a remedy for what seemed like a mortal sickness. With a true diagnosis, men turned to the problems which arise immediately out of the two great primary instincts—self-preservation and reproduction. The old civilisation had been recklessly wasteful in both these matters, attaching very little value to human

life, and permitting every kind of abuse in the indulgence of appetite. The result was a gradual depopulation of the Empire—on the one hand by infanticide, suicide, gladiatorial shows, military massacres; on the other, by the discovery of unnatural means of satisfying natural instincts.

Now, when we compare the civilization, say, of the second century after Christ, with the civilization of to-day, including all its tragedies and dangers, is it true to say that “neither science nor history gives us any warrant for believing that humanity has advanced except by accumulating knowledge and experience and the instruments of living”? I venture to think that it is a mistake to make too sharp a distinction between the two things. Knowledge and experience and the instruments of living cannot be accumulated without changing human nature, because their very accumulation is the work of the mind and spirit of man. Just so far as these accumulated results are of value—and Dr. Inge affirms that they are of great value—human nature has changed for the better in the making of them.

The relation between a progressive accumulation of results achieved and a progressive improvement in the human nature which achieves them, is seen to be extremely close and intimate when we refer it to those historic achievements of the human spirit which result in *the development and deepening of moral ideas*.

One of the most suggestive and valuable chapters in Thomas Hill Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics* is that in which he shows—in the case of the most prominent personal virtues recognized by the Greeks, courage and “temperance” (self-mastery or self-control)—that in modern times both the range of their application has been extended and the conception of the principle on which they rest deepened.¹ With regard to self-mastery, says Green, “we present to ourselves the objects of moral loyalty which we should be ashamed to forsake for our pleasures, in a far greater variety of forms than did the Greek, and it is a much larger self-denial which loyalty to these objects demands of us. It is no longer the State alone that represents to us the *melior natura* before whose claims our animal inclinations sink abashed. Other forms of association put restraints and make demands upon us which the Greek knew not.” We are moved by ideas of common good which could not have been made intelligible in the ancient world. “Society was not in a state in which the principle that humanity in the person of everyone is to be treated always as an end and never merely as a means, could be apprehended in its full universality; and it is this principle alone, however it may be stated, which affords a rational ground for the virtue of chastity as we understand it. The society of modern Christen-

¹ Green, *Prolegomena*, Book iii. ch. v.

dom is far enough from acting upon it; but in its conscience it recognizes the principle as it was not recognized in the ancient world."

We may, however, admit that there has been a development and deepening of moral ideas, and yet leave a serious consideration to be met. We must distinguish the two questions: (i.) Are our ideas of duty wider, deeper, and truer than those of previous generations? (ii.) Do we live up to our ideas of duty better than the men of previous ages lived up to their (possibly inferior) ideas? I answer that the distinction is most true and important. Our last quotation from Green suggests it. I admit, further, that the second question is the really vital question about progress; and that it is very difficult (from the nature of the case) to verify, in the detail of history, the improvement in human nature which an affirmative answer to the second question implies. Yet, even so, I urge that while we must not confuse the two questions, we cannot separate them. The wider, deeper, and truer ideas of duty are not simply dropped into human nature like meteorites falling from the sky to the earth beneath. They are the product at once of divine inspiration and human activity. In a real sense of the word they are our *creation*; and in the process of creating a new and true moral idea our nature does itself change for the better, and therefore demands a wider and deeper good.

III

There is no need to question the fact of the "ascent of man," properly understood. The trouble is that to see it we have to take very broad views of life and history; we have to detach ourselves from our own world—sometimes even from our own age altogether. And then we see the pathway of advance; but as we discern it, we see also how painfully slow the movement has been, and at what a cost it was achieved. We see it as we see on a distant mountain-side the silver lines made by a stream, but not its troubled progress in the channel wrought out by itself through thousands of years; or we see it as Tennyson's eagle saw the wild fury of ocean waves beating out their never-ending battle with the rocks: to the eagle, gazing down from a summit thousands of feet above, it was a *wrinkled sea* beneath him crawling. We are in the storm. It is no "wrinkled sea" that surrounds us now.

Before the war, there was hardly anything which many of us seemed to think about less than the price at which the material and moral gains were won which have come to us without any effort or personal sacrifice of our own. Not many had the insight which enables one to realize the almost immeasurable hardship and suffering through which nearly all these material and moral gains have come. The result was a prevalent temper to accept as its

legitimate due the result of ages of toil and sacrifice; or to take it as a matter of course, as we take the light of the sun or the air we breathe. Men did not deny the mysterious background, dark, sinister, unexplored, against which the path, by which the human race has slowly moved onwards, stands out in the twilight. But it passed out of notice. It was best forgotten. So most men seemed to think: until some quite concrete event or personal experience awakened imagination to it.

What this event or experience would be, seemed, very often, a matter of personal temperament, or even of accident. In one case, it might be the sufferings of a single child, awakening as it were suddenly a consciousness of the age-long burden that bears hardest on the innocent, and threatening with shipwreck a man's faith. In other cases, it might be such calamities as those at Martinique and St. Vincent in May 1902, or at Messina in December 1908. The disaster at Messina led to a correspondence of several weeks' duration in the *London Nation*, under the title "Why?" Some of the contributors wrote as if such a question had never occurred to them before.¹ Or it might be something of a totally different kind, as in the case of the man who brooded over the sufferings of rabbits which he had observed caught alive

¹ See *The Nation*, Jan. 9 to Feb. 16, 1909.

in wire gins, until he was moved to go and break the windows of some Government offices in Downing Street, as a protest against the civilization which sanctioned such cruelties. And the present writer well remembers a conversation, in a great Government Department in Whitehall, between himself and a level-headed man of the world, who had not appeared to be much affected by the sufferings caused by the war, but who was now profoundly moved by his personal knowledge of the position of a mother who had four sons fighting on four different fronts: they all perished in action, and the four messages all reached her on the same day. "It's too cruel," he said; "*it's too cruel.*"

The war appealed to the imagination of all. This is no matter of temperament, mood, or accident. The dark background can pass out of notice no more. We see all the epochs of human development full of gloomy and horrible passages of suffering and strife. Just as every coral island lifts its head above the sea because countless myriads of creatures have laid down their lives and left their remains unnoticed below, so, by the toll of a million million deaths, mankind has achieved his foothold on this earth and begun to be conscious of what he really is. What is to be the reaction of the modern spirit to the vision of this background? That is the question of questions for us all.

IV

Our first reaction is inevitably to ask once more the ancient question, at bottom the same question which the child asks at his mother's knee: "Why did God *let* it happen?" Why this fearful price to be paid, not only for the great victories of the spirit—their very greatness throws a sombre glory on the agonies through which they were achieved—but even for the smallest gains? To what purpose is this waste? We know that such questions can be and have been answered, in part: and the answers are accessible to all thoughtful people. It is not my purpose now to dwell upon these. But the force of the child's question "Why?" is unexhausted, for the answers are only in part.

Let us be willing to learn something more from the same child. When he is really suffering or in trouble, all such questions vanish. There is no longer any thought of why anyone let it happen. All the longing of his little soul is concentrated in the one cry: "Mother!" It is the cry for *some one who cares*. This is the elemental hunger of the human soul. This created all religions throughout the ages. And when all that the historian and the student of religion knows has been told, this remains: we hear it, rising from the great deep from which humanity came, penetrating every stage of historic culture; the cry for Some One who cares: the

feeling after a Great Heart to respond to the moving of our hearts: the listening for that word, "It is I; be not afraid!" borne by a deeper voice across the storm: the longing for a Love so wide yet so intimate that all our love is only part of it—even your love for your child only a part of the love with which God loves that child, now and for ever.

Let there be no mention of "proof" or "demonstration" here. This thing is far too high, too deep, to be measured in such terms. That from which the soul and its deepest hunger came can and will satisfy it to the uttermost in the end. A great Scottish preacher has spoken of "the unit of Power in the world." Even so we may speak of the "unit of Love in the world": it is "not God isolated from man, and not man isolated from God; but God and man united, working purposely and continuously together: God quickening and inspiring man, and man opening his life to be part of the Divine Life of the world."¹

All our questions are concentrated in the Cross of Christ. *Ecce Homo!* There was a being pure and true in body and soul, unique in moral power and insight, suffering the worst shame and agony at the hands of a few scheming priests and Roman executioners. The very things that were best in him they took advantage of, in order to wreak upon

¹ John Hunter, *De Profundis Clamavi*, p. 234.

him their worst. It might indeed seem as if the worst things in the world were there, working unrestrained, and doing their worst. And as men watched that scene in imagination, they might have said—as they have said of many lesser Calvaries of human suffering and sacrifice—"There is no God, there is only the devil," only a malignant or a blind and purposeless power. Yet an instinct in the heart of the world has judged otherwise. As men have watched that scene in imagination, they have said, "There is no devil, there is only God." They have perceived something more than the shame and agony, more than the short triumph of policy and priestly intrigue; they have perceived the highest thing in humanity, gaining through seeming defeat its perfect victory: the Love which means the entire willingness of a human soul to give the uttermost for the whole. The priests, the executioners, and the wondering crowd have gone; but that Cross dominates the ages still, because Love, thus triumphant, is the divinest thing the world has known. And now, the Cross has become a symbol, a type—no longer of some mysterious interchange of pain for mercy, between the Victim and the Almighty; but a symbol of something universally ennobling in human life; an elemental thing, at once human and divine—the unit of Power in the world.

It is related of Saint Thomas Aquinas that,

towards the end of his life, worn out with study and thought, and with labour in practical affairs, he was seen contemplating the familiar figure on the Crucifix, and was heard to murmur to himself—"Thou hast done all this for me: what have I done for Thee?" And we, as there rises before us a vision of the price which mankind has paid for progress—and above all else in this hour, as we contemplate, in reality or in imagination, those fields in France with their lines upon lines of still white stones—we, too, will say, deepening the meaning of the old Latin hymn, *Tantus labor non sit cassus!* All this suffering and sacrifice shall not fall to the ground in vain. For now we see, in the dark background of our human story, a vision of the fidelities and sacrifices of men and generations of men—a vision which is no longer a problem but an inspiration, even a consecration, that we too may give ourselves to the creation of the life and light, the liberty and joy, which mark the dawn of the kingdom of God.

II

IS EVIL NECESSARY ?

SUMMARY

I. Laws of Nature are "laws with an *if*." Meaning of the Reign of Law in the material and in the mental world; and its value for the discovery of means to avoid or destroy many kinds of evil.

II. Transference of question to the moral sphere. When evil is overcome by good an energy that was in the lower impulse is taken up into the service of a higher purpose, which could not realize itself otherwise. Hence formulation of final act of faith on which depends every conviction of the meaning and value of life.

III. Does it follow that the conflict with evil is necessarily a permanent condition of any individual soul? Can we conceive Perfection as without this element of struggle and conflict?

IS EVIL NECESSARY ?

THE pessimist poet, James Thomson, the author of "The City of Dreadful Night," represents himself as passing in vision through "Our Forest of the Past," and seeing the numbers of those who have suffered and those who have known true happiness, and conversing thus with his mysterious guide: "And I said, 'How few are these in their quiet bliss to all the moaning multitudes we have seen on our way !' And my companion answered, 'They are very few.' And I sighed, 'Must it always be so ?' And he responded: 'Did Nature destroy all those infants ? Did Nature bring forth all those idiocies and lunacies ? Or was not rather their chief producer the ignorance of man outraging Nature ? And the poor, the prisoners, the soldiery, the ascetics, the priests, the tyrants: were these the work of Nature, or the perversity of Man ?' And I asked: 'Were not the very ignorance and perversity of Man, from Nature ?' And he replied, 'Even so; yet, perchance, putting himself childlike to school, he may gradually learn from Nature herself to enlighten the one

and control the other.' ” Here is expressed the simple yet profoundly true thought, that Creation itself gives the means of warding off or destroying all the evils it seems to inflict. And we—if we are willing to “learn from Nature”—may discover these means and use them.

I

What is meant by “learning from Nature,” and how does such knowledge help us to do away with evil ?

A law of nature, when its real meaning is stated, does not tell us absolutely that anything “must” happen; it tells us that *if* certain things are done *then* certain things will follow. The real laws of nature are laws with an “if”; they do not themselves provide the occasions of their own operation. So far as man has succeeded in understanding this universe, he has done it by tracing such laws, which form the “order of nature.”

If there were no such order of nature—if, for example, water were to freeze at one temperature to-day and another to-morrow, other things, such as the pressure of the atmosphere, being the same—how should we be situated ? It is easy to see that under such conditions or no-conditions, knowledge, and even life itself, would be impossible. If this kind of uncertainty prevailed universally we

could neither understand things nor learn how to use them. In order that I may lay out an intelligent plan for my life and follow it, I must be able to count on things. The same thing is evident with regard to moral growth. I must be able to know what will result from the words I utter, the thoughts I think, the deeds I do. Only so can I develop a consistent character standing in intelligible relation to an orderly world. If human beings are to train themselves as intellectual, moral, and spiritual beings they must be in a "school-house" where perfect order is observed; and such a "school-house" this universe appears to be.

The meaning of the reign of law has not taken root in men's minds even at the present time. People constantly speak as if they did not know it or did not believe in it. Why is this ? It is clear that there are countless laws of nature of which we are ignorant. We know nothing of their significance for our life. Hence over a large part of life we act in ignorance of the laws on which the results of our actions depend. Then, when results happen which are really the expression of law, we ask *why* they happen. We forget our own ignorance. Sometimes the results of laws which we have ignorantly put in action are very terrible.

From the ethical point of view, it is admitted that often such ignorance is culpable.

We ought to have known. But it is clear that at other times we may in entire innocence and ignorance act so as to bring terrible suffering on ourselves and others. It is in the light of such facts that the reign of law appears blind and pitiless, utterly undivine. For such events are clearly the expression of law. They are the inevitable result of given conditions; and we in all ignorance and innocence set to work conditions which we do not understand, and we have to take the consequences. Hence the question arises and presses for an answer—why should it be so? Light on the problem comes in the form of a definite suggestion which we cannot prove, but which seems more possible the more we think it out. The question is, *What is the value of the reign of law in the universe?*

Death and suffering are its worst consequences; and these take place through our ignorance. Its best consequences we have seen. Because law is inviolable, intellectual moral and spiritual growth are possible. This is a matter of experience. But we seem driven beyond experience to the assumption that the reign of law is not merely the *actual* but the *only* means of realizing these supreme forms of good. In other words, that the reign of law is supreme over all minor goods; and is of far greater value than the preservation of life and the avoidance of suffering. By this we mean that the reign of law is

supreme not from the pitiless point of view, but from the point of view of our own higher life—that is, from the Divine point of view. This is a reasonable assumption. We find material for its application to the facts of life, in those accidents and disasters which are the outcome of human ignorance and of the inviolability of natural law. What we instinctively want is that nature's laws should be supreme *with exceptions*; in other words, that there should be constantly special interventions. But the inviolability of law must be of such value that these interventions would themselves be evil—a greater evil than the actual suffering and death which result from our mistakes. This is an assumption which goes beyond experience, and yet it seems to be forced upon us by the facts.

The power which has produced the evil has, in every case known to us, produced the means by which the evil may be overcome. Every advance in knowledge or experience is directly or indirectly a discovery of means which *if we will* we may use to avoid or do away with some evil that besets human life. Our experience is not simply of ignorance, but of ignorance being overcome by knowledge. In the moral world likewise, we have not good and evil simply side by side, as it were two opposite kinds of fruit on one tree. The very life of goodness consists in overcoming evil, just as the very life of knowledge consists in over-

coming ignorance. Through all our experience,
as we learn

the means

How things are perfected,

we are able to "improve on Nature," but it
is by Nature that we do it: for—

Nature is made better by no mean

But Nature makes that mean; so, even that art,

Which you say adds to Nature, is an art

Which Nature makes, . . .

Which does mend Nature, change it rather, but

The Art itself is Nature.

All this is surely an indication that *we men*
are intended to co-operate in the gradual de-
struction of evil, and that the real solution of
the problem of evil is its solution *in life* not
merely in thought.

II

The power which has produced the world
has produced us, and has given us the ideals
in the light of which we condemn the world:
and if it is the source of evil in the world,
it is also the source of the love which spends
itself in overcoming the evil. There are not
two separate facts in the world—good and
evil; there is one fact, good overcoming evil.
Only when we doubt the possibility of this
fact, is the problem of evil absolutely in-
soluble: and we see light as soon as we begin
to see the way in which "evil is overcome by

good." What happens when a lower impulse is subdued into the service of a higher purpose ?

The answer which we suggest is this: moral evil is what Browning called "stuff for transmuting." When good overcomes evil, it transforms it. A physical illustration may be given, which, because it is merely physical, is of course exceedingly imperfect. The electric energy which is displayed in the thunder-storm, and in that form is sometimes destructive of human works and human life, is the same energy which may be subdued to human purposes and becomes man's obedient and beneficent servant. But we may find all the illustrations we need in human life. When the restless impulses of children are—not uprooted or destroyed, but disciplined by exercises such as those of drill and kindergarten, into the service of rational purposes; when the selfishness of the child is set towards service, under the influence of love; when, in the man, anger is disciplined by courageous self-control; when what is sensual in love is turned towards the spiritual, under the influence of morality and religion—in all such cases, what happens ? The lower impulse is not simply destroyed. It undergoes a change which may be called *redemption*. Something in it is destroyed and something is saved. Our language is hardly capable of expressing these basal facts of experience. May we put it in this way ? An energy that was in the lower impulse is taken

up into the service of a higher purpose; and the energy which is thus taken up, would not have been available *in that way* if the evil had not been there.

It cannot be denied that the illustrations which have been given are illustrations of what actually happens in the lives of human beings through voluntary self-control, whether or not it is aided by inspiring influences from without. And when it takes place, it means the growth and strengthening of the moral personality in goodness. This, then, is the paradox: goodness grows by conflict with the very thing that tends to hinder its growth. The only goodness of which we have any experience is a goodness which has grown through struggle, ending—even if through temporary defeat—in victory.

“The only goodness of which we have any experience.” This is sometimes not true of the individual, unless we go back from him to his ancestry and in general to the past history of humanity. Some children, for instance, have such a natural impulse to sympathy and love that another’s trouble becomes their own, and they give up their own advantage willingly and gladly for the sake of another. But in general, or speaking broadly, the statement may be admitted. To say that a man is good means that he has wrought out goodness as the result of trying, of failure, of falling and rising again. The

struggle with inward evil is essential to the growth of character as we know it. The defeat, the failure, the falling, are indeed not essential. Defeat, which is the actual adoption of an evil impulse by the will, only means that the inward struggle has to be renewed with an enemy stronger than before.

Evil in certain forms remains a real possibility to a man at any given stage of moral development. He accepts it as a condition of moral progress. But such progress as he has already made has rendered certain other forms of evil impossible. What has happened ? Certain tendencies have changed their nature; they no longer operate as evils. The old alternatives no longer present themselves to his mind. Certain possibilities have ceased to exist. Let us suppose the case of two men, each of whom is offered a bribe to betray his country.¹ Neither takes the bribe but one is tempted to take it and the other is not. The one will feel his "fingers itch" and so forth, the other will be perfectly at ease however long the period of temptation may continue. The difference between the men is briefly this, that the one has his anarchic or lower desires under control, the other feels no such desires; the one is incapable of crime, the other incapable of temptation. Here the possibility of evil in one of its forms

¹ The illustration is from Seeley's Chapter, "The Christian a Law to himself," in *Ecce Homo*.

has ceased to exist. The lower impulse has been taken up into a higher enthusiasm—love of one's country.

Admitting the necessity of conflict with evil for the growth of goodness, we may fairly ask ourselves on what condition is the process justified. If we are here in this field of struggle to learn to live, if this is a moral and spiritual gymnasium through which we are to be developed and trained so that at last we may willingly live the life of the children of the highest, and attain to the service which is perfect freedom, then the process is greatly and amply justified *on one condition only*.

The condition is this—that in the very nature of things this highest goodness cannot be realized save through this conflict. In no respect is it a solution of the problem of moral evil to say that our goodness grows by conflict with it, if the same goodness could be equally attained by a process free from the element of perpetual effort and struggle. It is true we cannot conceive the nature of such a process entirely free from effort and struggle, but an Infinite Spirit could. But if in the very nature of things the goodness which is worth most could only be realized by this means then the case is very different. All the goodness *known to us* has grown in human souls through the overcoming of evil, and if inborn in human nature it points

back to human effort and struggle in the past. But the required condition is that from the point of view of the Infinite and Eternal the highest goodness can be realized in no other way. What men have wrought into their very being through effort and struggle, and, it may be, through suffering, must have a far greater value than we at present understand. In truth its value must be all but infinite to justify the process by which it is attained. We know of ourselves that the strength and experience and sympathy so gained are of great worth; but the truth must be that their worth is so great that no price is too high to pay for them. We can state this condition, but we cannot demonstrate its reality, because it is a condition the experience of which is beyond our finite experience. At this point, however, we do seem to have reached the final act of faith on which we must stake all our conviction of the meaning and value of life.

III

Our conclusion is then that when good conquers in the inner conflict, it takes up into its own service an element that was in the evil, which is therefore necessary for the growth and realization of the good.

It may be said: "If this is so, would we not be justified in doing evil that good may come—in sinning, that through the forgive-

ness and transfiguration of the sin, grace may the more abound? If it is true that evil is good in the making, then the more evil there is in the world, the more abundantly good will the universe ultimately be."

This conclusion does not follow from our principle that conflict and struggle are necessary for the realization of goodness. The more evil there is in the world, the worse the world will be, unless there are also in the world more men and women strong enough in soul and good enough to grapple with and conquer the evil. And if the inner conflict is necessary, it does not follow that we are justified in "doing evil" in order that good may increase. We cannot begin to do evil without yielding in the conflict and giving it up. To do evil is not to maintain the conflict; it is to desert the service of the better for the service of the worse. Suppose that it were necessary for certain great purposes that a far-reaching and severe international conflict should be carried on: to say that the struggle is necessary is not to say that the soldiers of the better side should become renegades to the other.

Surely, it may be said, in absolute and complete perfection evil must disappear? This is not denied. But to appeal to absolute and complete perfection is to appeal to something beyond finite experience. We are in every respect imperfect and immature. We are infants in the school of life, and we must

accept the conditions under which alone progress can be made. If this condition of moral conflict is a stage, however long in time the stage may be, through which souls must pass on their journey to the highest, then—though there may for ever be some world, some part of the boundless realm of existence, where this condition of evil and struggle and development is going on, though there may always be some souls passing through it, it is *not necessarily a permanent condition as touching any one individual soul*. Evil would be finally and utterly inexplicable only if it were to be permanent so far as any one soul or any group of souls is concerned. It would seem to be less dark and mysterious if its presence in the universe gives to goodness the material by which it grows.

We have said that absolute and complete perfection is beyond finite experience. This needs explanation. It is profoundly true that our highest conception of the divine must be a conception derived directly from what is best in the human. We regard our ideals of love and goodness, of beauty and truth, as affording positive insight into the nature of the eternal. This is not—as Herbert Spencer supposed it to be—an evanescent form of the anthropomorphism of savages; it is an anthropomorphism which is capable of growing in depth and critical power with the growth of human nature.

If we are able to grasp the idea of an Infinite which does not exclude the finite from itself, but embraces it—and of a finite that does not limit the Infinite, but realizes it—then we see that the experience of the finite may be a direct revelation of the Infinite which is not degraded by predicates derived from that experience. It is true that any such predicate falls far short of the reality, and in this sense “the Ultimate Cause is in every respect greater than can be conceived.” But this does not mean that it is “unknowable,” as the late John Caird has eloquently and forcibly shown. “It is because we conceive of the unknown not as ‘a mystery absolutely and for ever beyond our comprehension,’ but as containing more of what is admirable to us than we can grasp—because our intelligence is confronted by an object which is immeasurably above it in its own line, that there is awakened within us a sense of our own littleness in contrast with its greatness. In the presence even of finite excellence—of human genius and learning—we may be conscious of feelings of deep humility and silent respectful admiration; and this, too, may be reverence for the unknown. But that which makes this reverence a possible and wholesome feeling is that it is reverence not for a mere blank inscrutability, but for what I can think of as an intelligence essentially the same as my own,

though far exceeding mine in its range and power. . . . In like manner, the grandeur which surrounds the thought of the absolute, the infinite reality beyond the finite, can only arise from this, not that it is something utterly inconceivable and unthinkable, but that it is the realization of our highest ideal of spiritual excellence. The homage rendered to it is that which is felt for a being in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all the inexhaustible wealth of that boundless realm of truth in which thought finds ever increasing stimulus to aspiration, ever growing food for wonder or delight.”¹

Here the question of the relation of evil to perfection arises in its most pressing form. Evil is always something which obstructs the true development of human nature in one or other of its aspects. We have seen the significance of this fact in the case of moral evil. And we have rejected the assumption that the struggle with evil is an everlasting condition as touching any individual soul. Hence the question may be pressed: must not this struggle, after all, in some way survive and be maintained even in perfection itself? Or can there be an activity, not only devoid of the kind of change that is felt as trouble and insecurity (where things merely “happen”) but also devoid of all discord

¹ See his *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, ch. i, pp. 16-18, ed. of 1889.

and obstruction and of all such change as implies *growth* and *decay*?

Imperfect activity—such as characterizes finite beings as we know them—involves just that kind of change. Its source is the longing of the imperfect for the perfect. It is the process by which the finite reaches whatever degree of perfection is possible under the limitations of its nature. A perfect activity would be beyond this kind of change. Such would be the activity of a perfect spirit who is ever all that he can be. Such activity cannot be conceived as analogous to a Buddhist *Nirvana*. Instead of calling it *rest* we should call it *constancy*. Such constancy is beyond time because it is beyond that kind of change which time involves.

Analogies—necessarily imperfect, because mechanical—may even be found in the material world. “Equilibrium” does not mean cessation of activity. The activity is as intense as ever, but it is devoid of mechanical instability, as for example when two forces are approximately balanced, or when two bodies have come to approximately equal temperatures. Again, in the world of life—adopting Spencer’s conception of life as consisting in the mutual adjustment of “internal relations” and “external relations”—we can imagine the correspondence between the organism and its environment perfected to any extent. Perfect correspondence would be perfect

physical life, when the organism would either adapt itself completely to an unchanging environment or instantaneously and *pari passu* to a changing one, expressing its nature in its activities, without alteration or decay, gaining nothing and losing nothing, because of the perfect equipoise of waste and repair.

These are only analogies, and moreover, though conceivable and possible, they are imaginary analogies. But are there actual traces, in our human experience, of an activity which does not exclude change but is beyond growth and decay ? The answer is, that we find the beginnings of this capacity in every experience where we have the fulfilment of a purpose, which, though it is temporal, is one of progressive attainment. A convenient illustration may be found in the appreciation of a musical composition, in which there is a progress from chord to chord, from phrase to phrase, from movement to movement. Such a work has its value not only in the attainment of its final chord, but at every stage of the process which leads towards this conclusion. In other words, it is a whole. And any real appreciation of it involves the grasping of it as a whole, through its successive chords, phrases, and movements.

We may say that all real attainment is progressive attainment, when every stage in the process is itself a contribution to, and in fact a portion of, the result attained. It is

not a question of being more or less "near to" a fixed goal, but of having now and here more or less realized an end. The attainment has no meaning and no reality save as the culmination of the entire process.¹

In moral experience this is seen in the realization of good through conflict with evil. When some form of evil has been overcome, when it has ceased to be an obstruction and a mere source of discord, when its energy has been taken up into the service of a higher desire and disposition, we find that there is an increase in the fullness and mental strength of the higher disposition which has thus been established.

Thus to transcend mere struggle, obstruction, and discord, is not to lose but to gain in intensity of life. This is only to say in other words that every *attainable* good implies an experience beyond mere conflict; and since a good really attained must be possessed and enjoyed, it also implies transcendence of any change which involves loss or defect. We are finite beings, and we realize this fragmentarily, as it were "here a little and there a little." But when we com-

¹ The experience of "progressive attainment" is illustrated even in the desire to win a game of skill. The healthy desire to win is not a desire for that particular result *per se*, in isolation (which might mean a desire to win by any means, fair or unfair). It is a desire for that result as the culmination of a process every step of which is a lawful contribution to it and is in fact part of it.

bine these indications with the verdict of religious experience, and carry them to the ideal limit, we are led to the conception of eternal life which is thus defined by one of the most lucid thinkers of the Middle Ages:—

“Eternity is the complete and perfect possession of unlimited life all at once (*interminabilis vitæ tota simul et perfecta possessio*). This becomes clearer by the comparison of the things of time. Whatever lives in time, proceeds through the present from the past to the future. And nothing which is subject to time can embrace the whole space of its life at once; what pertains to to-morrow it has not yet laid hold of, and what pertains to yesterday it has already lost. . . . Whatsoever, then, endures the conditions of time—although, as Aristotle thought of the universe, it should never have begun, and should never cease to be, and if life should extend to an infinity of time—would not yet deserve on that account to be regarded as eternal. It does not comprehend and embrace the whole space of its life, infinite though that life may be, all at once; the future it has not yet, the past it has no longer. Whatsoever, then, embraces and possesses the whole plenitude of unlimited life all at once, from which nought of the past has flowed away, *that* is rightly deemed eternal. Such a being of necessity must grasp the infinity of moving time as present.”

III.

DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYER ?

SUMMARY

I. Prayer as the expression of personal desire always seeks the petitionary form: the offering of the desire to God, in order that the personal petition, without losing its distinctive meaning, may be blended with acquiescence and rest in the Divine Will.

II. In reference to the Reign of Law, whether in the material or the spiritual realm, and in reference to the providential order of the world, petitionary prayer is on the same level with human actions in general; prayer for a result is no more absurd than action for a purpose. Response to prayer may not include literal fulfilment of the petition.

III. How may these conclusions be applied to explain the meaning and value of prayer as healing, of intercessory prayer, and of common prayer?

DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYER ?

THROUGH the age-long story of human religions, we seem to hear the spirit of man slowly learning to ask a question and build life on the answer: "What is all this universe to me? What has it to do with my life? Is there anything in me which has relation to earth and air, sun and star, the depths of space and time, the mysterious Whole itself? Is there anything in that Whole which has relation to me?" Each individual has proceeded from the immeasurable universe; there is in him something of all that exists. Feeling thus the possibility of a secret communion between himself and the universe, man becomes conscious of himself as personal, as a living soul. Hence religion, in all but its lowest forms, has meant not only some kind of belief in a Power outside ourselves; it has meant belief in a Power which is akin to ourselves and exerts an influence on our lives to which gratitude and reverence are our natural and fitting response.

We have proceeded from this universe. We feel within ourselves our relationship to the

vast order around us. The spiritual treasures whose beginnings are in us, like the substance and strength of our bodily frame, are in us because their fountain-head is in the Whole from which our personality arises. And in the end we learn to say: Thy face, O Source of all my life, will I seek! O Reason, who hast formed this mind in me, it shall aspire to Thee and in Thy great light shall expand! O Love, who has made this heart, it shall seek Thy fulness, and in Thy strength be strong!

Prayer is thus interpreted as the movement of the soul putting itself into personal relation with the mysterious Power "whose presence it feels even before it is able to give it a name." There is no need to dwell on the historical and religious significance of this interpretation. William James indicates its central importance when he defines prayer as "every kind of inward communion or converse with the Power recognized as divine." James calls this "prayer in the wider sense"; and he carefully distinguishes it from prayer as petition, while claiming for both acts a real and fruitful place in experience.¹ We must take a further step, and insist on the significance of the twofold fact, that these acts are distinct and yet inseparable. The essence of prayer is communion *in and through* petition. All the difficulties and perplexities of prayer, and all its possibilities of spiritual strength and

¹ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 463 ff., 467 ff.

power, spring from this union of the two acts: the union of a human or subjective and a divine or objective aspect.

I

Prayer is not merely the feeling of various wishes or wants. It does not begin until the man not only feels the "wish" or "want" but consciously makes it a personal desire of his own, and thinks of a personal good to be attained or evil to be avoided in the filling of the want. Prayer therefore depends on a man's conception of some personal satisfaction to be attained in the fulfilment of a desire: not necessarily a selfish satisfaction, for it may arise only through his interest in others, and may be sought in spite of any amount of personal suffering on his part incidental to its attainment. But if it is to be made the subject of prayer, he must voluntarily identify himself with the desire for it: it must be, in the full meaning of the words, his "soul's sincere desire." None the less, desire in itself is only the beginning of prayer; it is the human side of it, with its divine implications and possibilities left out.

Prayer is the offering of desire to a Divine Being who is recognized as personal and as able to respond. On such a Power men feel themselves to be dependent. It is therefore almost a psychological necessity that prayer

should take the petitionary form—the natural form in which the sense of dependence finds expression: for even in the inner life of the spirit we are perpetually reminded how great our needs are, and how small is the inner provision we have made to meet the dangers, temptations, and perplexities that surround us. Petition is not the whole of prayer; but it is a legitimate and necessary part of it, flowing from the imperfection and incompleteness of human life. It is, again, almost a psychological necessity that petition should take the verbal form. It is true that no human desire can fully utter itself in speech. Readers of Browning will be familiar with this thought, and with the passionate denial that

this coil

Of statement, comment, query, and response,
Tatters all too contaminate for use,

can come between the human heart and the Divine. But we cannot throw away our instruments because they are imperfect. The feeling from which a desire springs always seeks to complete itself by finding some expression, however imperfect, in words.

Prayer does not involve the exclusion of petition, or the annihilation of desire, or the resolution of all desires into the one aspiration of Quietism, "Thy will be done." Even contemplation of the character of God, even communion with Him, if it ends in mere resignation of ourselves to His will, is scarcely to be

distinguished from the theistic fatalism of Islam, with its submission to the inexorable Will which it calls God.

On the other hand, prayer is not the holding of a desire as though it were the greatest good or the supremely perfect blessing. No human desire can be that. At its best it is the expression of a man's aspiration—a man, with human imperfections, weaknesses, limitations. The highest good that we can desire is only a broken fragment of that Perfect Good which eye saw not, ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man. If our broken fragment of desire is really good, it is because it contains within it a gleam from the perfect Light or is suffused with a glow from the central Fire.

We must think of prayer not as the annihilation of desire or its deification, but as the offering of desire to God, in order that the personal petition, without losing its distinctive meaning, may be blended and fused into one whole with conscious acquiescence and rest in the Divine Will. “‘O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.

. . . O my Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, Thy will be done.’ . . . And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him: and being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly.”

We urge, therefore, that prayer is not merely

another name for communion with God. It stands for a specific form which that communion may take. It is the *discipline of desire* in the light of the best consciousness of God that we can attain unto, and the endeavour, through that desire, to educate ourselves into communion with Him. Petitionary prayer becomes a specific method of communion between man and God; and the basis of belief in prayer must always lie in spiritual experience, whether our own or that of some person whom we accept as spiritual authority or guide.

II

The next question to be faced is this: Under what conditions is the actual petition itself fulfilled, and what are the limits within which petitionary prayer is legitimate?

A "law of nature," as a scientific conception, involves no assumption that anything is fatally determined *a tergo*; it involves the assumption that *if* certain conditions are realized *then* a certain result will follow. It is a "law with an *if*"; it does not provide the occasions of its own operation. This definition of "law" would be widely accepted at the present time, and it is evidently involved in all experimental science. Unfortunately it is often accepted under a limitation which destroys a great part of its significance. The

“antecedents”—the conditions required for the operation of the law and implied in the “if”—are assumed to be limited to previous events in space and time, being therefore material conditions capable of reduction to mechanical terms. It may be practically convenient for science, or some department of science, to adopt this assumption as a working hypothesis; but if presented as the final truth, it appears to be a wholly arbitrary dogma. It carries with it the equally groundless dogma that the material order is a closed sphere in whose necessary sequences spirit cannot intervene; from which it follows that any material movement—whether of molecule of a brain or orbit of a planet—can only be produced by other antecedent or concurrent material movements. It is remarkable that such men as Martineau and F. W. Robertson were prepared to accept this *so far* as to exclude prayer from any efficacy in the physical order, while earnestly contending for its place and efficacy in the spiritual realm, and that the Rev. W. Knight—afterwards Professor in the University of St. Andrews—published an able and elaborate argument to the same effect during the controversy aroused in the seventies by the late Professor Tyndall.¹ The reign of law holds equally in the worlds of matter and of mind. If a Divine response to prayer for some material benefit is to be described as an

¹ *The Contemporary Review*, January, 1873.

“intervention in the sequence of material phenomena,” and denied, as a “violation of law,” then a Divine response to prayer for a spiritual benefit is equally an intervention in the order of spiritual phenomena and equally a violation of law. In reality there is no “violation of law” in either case. There is the emergence of *a new condition* modifying, perhaps transforming, the conditions which are actually at work and tending to produce a certain result.

But if the goodness of God is unlimited and unconditioned, how can imperfect and ignorant creatures, such as we are, expect God’s response ever to take the form of a change in the action of His Will? Can we imagine the Almighty saying: “I can avert this blow and the affliction that it will cause, but I will not avert it unless I am asked to?” The confusion of thought involved in this natural and apparently most relevant objection was stated with remarkable lucidity by St. Thomas Aquinas.

The providential order of the world is so far from excluding secondary causes that it is actually realized by their means. These causes fall into various grades of importance and worth. They are not limited to material or physical agencies. Among other causes, human action holds a very important place. We act, not because anyone supposes that by doing so we can change the Divine ordinance, but because we must act in order to attain

certain ends. In so far as these ends are harmonious with the Divine plan, they are *good* in the full meaning of the word.

In this respect, petitionary prayer is on the same level with human actions in general. We do not pray in order to change God's ordinance but to achieve those things which in God's ordinance are possible to be achieved by petitionary prayer. "Therefore, to say that we should not pray to receive anything from God, because the order of His Providence is unchangeable, is like saying that we should not walk to get to a place, nor eat to support life." St. Thomas, therefore, concludes that "if the immutability of the Divine plan does not withdraw the effects of other causes, neither does it take away the efficacy of prayer."¹

Hence we have from the outset insisted that genuine prayer is much more than "asking." It is the expression of a spiritual activity—a man's identification of himself with a desire and his offering of the desire to God in the consciousness (necessarily a partial and imperfect consciousness) of what God is. It is the actual expression of an inner force proceeding in the life; it gains in strength and value by shaping before the mind just what it aims at, defining an ideal, and setting it free from everything unworthy to be offered to God.

¹ *Contra Gentiles*, Rickaby's abridged translation, pp. 257-9.

In all things our motto must therefore be, not *laborare est orare*, but *ora et labora*. "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night." Let the question be put in a concrete form, as the modern mind would put it: "A man finds himself in a post of trust in which he is constantly tempted to fraud, and has every opportunity of doing so with impunity. Shall he pray for God's help to overcome the temptation? Will it do him any good?" Goodness cannot be had for the earnest asking, any more than knowledge can; if prayer were only asking, it could not make the foolish mind wise, any more than it could make the barren soil fertile. To be efficacious, it must embrace an actual endeavour to identify self with the higher law written in the mind—thus rousing the dormant faculty of resistance and intensifying the desire for personal righteousness.

Experience shows that such prayers are not vain, even though the response may not include literal fulfilment of the petition. They are not vain, any more than all human action is vain because disappointment and failure are facts of experience. A statesman prays that his country may be delivered from the tragedy of war. He offers to God his labour, long, persistent, faithful, that this great deliverance may be secured. He fails to control the tidal waves of international discord, which at length burst through with devastating force. Let

him now labour as earnestly and pray as sincerely for insight into historic causes, and for courage and faithfulness to principle, as he laboured and prayed for change in historic events: and the heaven that fled from the earth will return to the heart. He rests upon a greater strength that flows into him and lifts him above himself; he becomes possessed of a power which is more than the power of his single self.

The parents, in agony, pray for the life of their child. The supplication is a cry to God which summons to the point of need the resources of knowledge, skill, and tenderness; but it is unavailing. Through some deficiency of knowledge or skill the conditions are not met. The child is taken from their arms. As the suppliants wrestle with destiny, as they press closer and closer to the necessity driving ruthlessly across their deepest and cherished happiness, the cry for a life becomes a cry that the loss of life may not be wholly crushing, a cry for patience, courage, trust. A voice is heard across the storm, stronger than the tumult of grief, saying: "It is I, be not afraid." The agony of Gethsemane found its solution in the strength that said: "Thy will be done"; and the denial of the petition set free a stream of spiritual energy containing within it the promise and potency of the world's redemption.

From the principle implied in *ora et labora*

it follows that prayer has no place in reference to events—such as those constituting the general order of cosmic phenomena—where all intervention of human agency is excluded. We may, indeed, admit that the range of events into whose causation human agency does actually enter is larger than it appears to be. Sir G. G. Stokes pointed out¹ the immense variety and complexity of conditions affecting changes in the weather, and suggested that even the action of a child might bring about such a change. But we must ask, Can any practical use be made of such a possibility in determining the limits of prayer? A prayer for rain is offered precisely at the time when human agency fails and because it fails. The event practically belongs to the order of nature which is determined by the Divine Will alone—assuming that super-human intermediate agencies are excluded. Presented as a petition, it does not differ in principle from prayer that an eclipse of the moon, announced on astronomical grounds for a certain date, shall take place on some other date.

The great possibilities of human endeavour and achievement, in the material and in the moral world, may be counted one of the discoveries of our age; but their actualities are limited by the concrete conditions of existence. The limit of what we can attain in

¹ *Gifford Lectures*, pp. 217 ff., quoted in *Cambridge Theological Essays*, pp. 291-2, where apologetic use is made of the passage.

the day-to-day details of life is reached far sooner than the limit of what we need, and the limit of what we need is reached far sooner than the limit of our legitimate desire. We know what this means in the hour when we are *at the end of our resources*: when we are faced by a situation where we have done all that we can do—perhaps all that a human being can do: when we can only wait for the inevitable calamity or tragedy which we now see must come. It is said that when the hunted hare perceives that in spite of all its efforts the hounds are gaining on it, and it can do no more for itself, it screams aloud. And when, in human experience, all that before seemed real is shaken and falls as solid walls in the shock of an earthquake, then the outcry of the soul's elemental instinct is heard, sometimes only as the cry of the terrified beast, yet ever and again rising to meet the tragedies of life, not in petition that what must be, shall not be, but in prayer which passes beyond all petition and loses itself in the deep sense of need of the Living God, the Soul of Goodness in things evil.

III

We may now examine the application of our principle to some special aspects of prayer which are of great practical importance: prayer as healing, prayer as intercession, and prayer as the common act of a group.

The universe is so constituted that if we learn and obey its laws, we receive its treasures. Our natural and scientific knowledge suggests of itself that there are resources around us, which, if we could lay hold on them, would enable us to achieve what is as yet beyond our dreams. Science assumes that the latent resources are no more than forms of physical energy. Our interpretation implies that they are not only physical, but also mental, moral, and spiritual. If Nature says to the discoverer and the inventor, "Obey me, learn of me, have perfect confidence in me," much more are the unrealized treasures of the mental, the moral, the spiritual world offered to us on like terms. There are resources available to build up the character, the moral health, the spiritual happiness of all who seek their co-operation by fulfilling the conditions through which alone their virtue is obtained.

Prayer for spiritual good for ourselves, if it is genuine, must mean the identification of self with an ideal desire. This is an indispensable condition for the attainment of the end desired; for it becomes an act of will. It is impossible to deny that such petitions have a spiritual effect. The utmost that can be said on the negative side is that these effects are only the mind's reaction on itself: prayer as a mental condition is followed by a certain mental result and so "answers itself." This is now called "self-suggestion." It must be

distinctly understood that this name, though valuable for its implications, explains nothing. It names a fact; and room must be left for the religious interpretation of the fact—which is, that God invariably answers such prayers in a certain way. If the process were believed to be wholly subjective it would cease to be prayer. The reference to the Divine object would disappear. And the process would become one of directing our thoughts so as to secure a subjective result which we desire to attain. This opens up the wide and most practical question of “mind-cure” or mental healing in all its forms. The persistent direction of thought and attention is known to produce, under certain conditions, results which may extend beyond the mental life as ordinarily understood, and may affect the vital functions of the bodily frame. But no such mental endeavour is prayer unless it takes the form of a desire offered to God in the consciousness of what God is; and this means the reinforcement of the desire by the strongest force that can enter into human experience.¹

The truth seems to be that instead of reducing prayer to a process of self-suggestion affecting our own spirits merely, we must see in prayer a deepening and development of the unexplained power of self-suggestion which we witness every day. Even the act of self-suggestion which makes no conscious appeal

¹ See this illustrated by James, *Gifford Lectures*, p. 466.

to a super-personal power and believes that it is only calling up latent personal resources, must derive its ultimate efficacy from an increased inflow from the Infinite Life which the mind's "effort of attention" (the psychologically "reduced" definition of *faith*) does in some way induce. Our lives must be continuously dependent on the Divine Life of the universe; but its inflow varies in abundance and power in correspondence to variations in the attitude of our own minds.

If God is the Soul of souls, aspiration to God is to a centre where the issues of all lives meet. Founded on this faith, prayer as *intercession* is the endeavour, by means of our communion with God, to benefit another.

It is a plain fact of experience that individuals are dependent on one another and influenced by one another in countless ways both above and below the range of conscious deliberate intention. And it is now known that there is an increasing body of evidence for the influence of mind on mind in ways transcending the ordinary channels of sense. The forms taken by this interpersonal influence, whether "normal" or "super-normal," are related to genuine prayer as "autosuggestion" is. An act of ideal "autosuggestion," deepened and strengthened by the consciousness of God, becomes a prayer. So may any endeavour to help another become prayer. When we are in personal contact or

intercourse with a fellow-creature, the offering to God of our desire for his welfare may, and indeed must, deepen and strengthen our power to inspire or save him.

Are there, then, some good things that God will not give to my friend unless I pray that he may have them ? This is a question which met us before in another form ; but the answer is fundamentally the same. Prayer is a vital factor in my relation to my fellow-man, because in prayer I realize that this relation is divinely constituted. God deals with my fellow-man in ways beyond the capacity of my thought to conceive ; but so far as God acts on my fellow-man through my desire and will, so far may the offering of my desire for a fellow-creature's good be a condition for the fulfilment of God's purpose for that man. We may accept this as more than a mere possibility if we bear in mind the need of active endeavour, the significance of failure, and the inevitable limitations of human desire. And when the question of Divine answers to specific intercessory petitions is raised, we may reply with Canon Streeter : " Whether it is because when we pray for others we are less blind to their real and highest needs than we are when we pray for ourselves, or whether it is because such prayers, being more disinterested, are more truly prayers 'in His name,' it is the experience of many with whom I have spoken on this subject that such prayers are

answered too often and in too striking a way to make the hypothesis of coincidence at all a possible explanation.”¹

Intercession is the culmination of prayer. It begins by deepening our objective interests and developing in us a wider sympathy. The feeling of self is merged in the feeling of a larger human life. And we rise to the consciousness of a communion with God which is possible only because we no longer think of our self alone.²

The psychological justification of *Common prayer in public worship* is—to use current terminology—“the suggestibility of the individual through the social group.” From this point of view Canon Streeter has stated the essential condition involved: “It is only in so far as the congregation, or at any rate the majority of those present, are at the same moment concentrating themselves on the same act of devotion that the object of ‘assembling together’ is fully attained.” Personal interests give place to the elemental things, the abiding needs and aspirations of

¹ Streeter, *Restatement and Reunion*, p. 27. “Experimental” tests for the efficacy of intercession, such as the hospital-ward test proposed by Tyndall in 1872, must be dismissed as irrelevant. If the thoughts and desires of a number of persons were collectively concentrated in prayer and directed to a group of sufferers, a change in the condition of the latter might result, without involving anything more than the effects of human intervention.

² Compare John xvii. 21-23.

humanity; and the satisfaction of these appears as the primary and fundamental interest of the common will. Whatever be the order or method adopted, the problem is at once psychological and religious: to arouse and guide the attention and thought of the assembly so that each one may become responsive to the Divine influence. And the dangerous, pervasive effects of custom, convention, routine, do not alter the essential fact of the ideal purpose of common prayer.

Must we hold that common prayer ought to be limited to these elemental things? May it not extend to the concrete conditions of the national life; above all, in times of public distress and danger?

The case of the war will more than suffice for illustration. Other national conflicts and difficulties, external and internal, might be adduced; but this ultimate tragedy will test the worth of our principle best. It has been maintained that any community entering on a war which it believes to be righteous, ought to be able to make prayer the test of its conviction: "Can we, with a clear conscience, pray for victory?" We fully admit that there is a sense in which this is true. We admit that, given the sincere conviction of the righteousness and justice of our cause, we ought to pray for victory. We ought not to fear to offer our desire and will for victory to God, in the consciousness of what God is. But

this means that we have cast away every vestige of the notion of a tribal God who makes it His business to guard the temporal prosperity and success of any race or nation. This belief, which was literally burnt out of the soul of ancient Israel as by a consuming fire, dies hard in the modern world.

Even then, it is said, what possible meaning can we give to the issues of prayer when two opposed human wills are both praying for victory ? The only possible reply is to point to the actual source of the conflicting petitions. Its source is in the opposition and conflict of human wills. If this is inconsistent with prayer, then it is equally inconsistent with the assumption of any unifying and universal purpose in human life and with the unfolding of any Divine plan on the field of time. That the limitations and imperfections of human nature involve the possibility of such conflicts is evident. And the relation of human prayer to the providence of God is at bottom one with that of human deeds. It is also evident that human deeds, whatever be their quality of wisdom or unwisdom, good or evil, are wrought on the field of time into issues beyond the intention and will of the agents and even beyond their power of conception.

“And Joshua went to him and said unto him, Art thou for us or for our adversaries ? And he said, Nay ; but as Captain of the Host of the Lord I am come.” Even so we look

into the dim unknown where lie the issues of the world's present life; and with the same intensity of meaning the question rises to our lips. To us, as to him, the same mysterious answer is given—mysterious, yet boundless in its significance. To us, it is borne down through the voice of the age-long experience of man, ever varying, yet ever the same, whose sound is as the sound of many waters, deeper and more penetrating than the storms which rage in this or any time. In all the quests and conquests of this life we are but doing our part in a Host as innumerable as the ages of time. We are workers in a Great Plan whose issues are vaster than our clearest vision can discern. And to him the Voice said, as it says to us to-day if we have ears to hear: "Not as Captain of thy host only, or of theirs, do I come; not as guarantor that all for which thou goest forth to contend with them shall be won, or lost; but as Messenger of that Host whose movement means that in this struggle thou and thy foes are serving greater ends, ministering in deeper ways to the meaning of human life, kindling a flame whose brightness shall show the terror and the glory of the Eternal Law of Justice and Righteousness on earth."

IV

ATHANASIUS THE MODERNIST.

Born in Alexandria about A.D. 297; died in Alexandria, 373.

SUMMARY

I. The theological issue raised by Athanasius is vital to Religion: has the very God entered into Humanity? Relation of the religious and philosophical meanings of the Divine Fatherhood. Salvation the essentially divine work, *from God, through man*. Does this warrant the conclusion that one only God-man is Saviour?

II. Christianity as contributing a new religious idea and ideal: Sonship of Man to God, implying unity and continuity of nature (not of individuality). Metaphors illustrating different aspects of the truth. Principle of unity in difference, as in "I and my Father are one."

III. Distinction between Sonship and Creation. The downward movement of created things to annihilation, counteracted by the upward movement due to participation in the Divine Reason. Nevertheless, misuse of the human will is always a real possibility.

IV. Meaning of the Fall of Man; downward movement to moral and spiritual Death. Hence necessity of an Incarnation of God; assumed to be a unique and miraculous event. Modern experience demands extension of the Incarnation idea from the Person of Christ to the Nature of man.

ATHANASIUS THE MODERNIST

I.

THE doctrinal controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries are in some respects among the most discreditable episodes in the history of Christianity; but if estimated according to their inner meaning, they are among the most momentous episodes in that history. Thus Harnack, in spite of a strong bias due to his active dislike of ecclesiastical theology, is forced to admit that a question which penetrates to the root of religion was at issue—*Has God Himself entered into humanity?* If this question is to be answered in the negative, then, though metaphysics and ethics (of a sort) might survive, religion is destroyed for ever.

In an age when secret intrigue and open violence, personal rivalry and theological hatred, entered into men's dealings with the greatest mysteries of existence, one man in the East, Athanasius of Alexandria, stands alone like a rock in the sea. Nothing ignoble or mean can be laid to his charge. With triumphant tenacity he held fast by his faith

to the end. And the long years of what seemed to be perpetually renewed defeat—and, above the rest, the six years when, a fugitive in hiding in the deserts of Egypt, he could communicate with the world only by the hand of trusted friends—were the years when he did most to force the world to feel the power of the faith in defence of which he had staked his life.

When we investigate the inner meaning of this faith, we are led to an unexpected discovery. Athanasius is of interest not merely as a distinguished father of fourth century orthodoxy. We find in him a strong and pervading tendency which we can only describe as one of *Modernism*, if we understand this term to refer to a general outlook on Christian experience rather than to questions such as the historicity of miracles.

What was it, then, that Athanasius had at heart? To answer this question, we must distinguish two ways in which we may understand the *Fatherhood of God*. We may lay special stress on the ethical and spiritual significance of the Divine Fatherhood, understanding it as set forth in the life and teaching of Christ recorded in the first three Gospels. Or, again, we may emphasize its philosophical or metaphysical significance—the idea of God as the Source of all Being; in Spencer's words, "the Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed"; in traditional terms, the

Almighty Creator. This latter meaning of "Fatherhood" is specially in the foreground in the doctrinal discussions of the fourth century.

The religious conception is obviously not the same as the metaphysical conception. The conviction of Athanasius is that the former cannot stand unless its relation to the latter is rightly understood. The one conception appeals especially to the Emotions and the Will, the other to the Reason. Hence his defence of his position implicitly involves a defence of some philosophical principles of fundamental importance. But these principles are of interest to him only because they contribute to the interpretation of experience. Personal experience is his starting-point and goal. *Men need salvation.* Although no human being is entirely without some measure of the Divine Spirit; although the Divine Image is not effaced in anyone; yet, when men are left to themselves, evil gains a gradually stronger hold on them and stifles the vital spark of the Divine. They need to be saved from the evils that beset their inner life; and to save men thus is the characteristically and essentially Divine work. This is the spiritual and ethical meaning of the Fatherhood.

Personal experience teaches Athanasius that divine saving power is actually at work among men, through Jesus Christ—but only through Jesus Christ; and this salvation he believes to

be the direct and immediate action of the Infinite and Eternal God. Thus the spiritual and philosophical meanings of the Fatherhood are combined. There is something in Jesus Christ which is essentially Divine, which is the source of saving power, and which constitutes Jesus the *true* and *only* Son of God. In devoting all his powers to defence of the principle that true sonship implies unity of nature, that the Son is "one in nature" with the Father and "from the essence" of the Father, Athanasius is really contending for the preservation of *one* open channel by which the redeeming power that is divine may pervade humanity. Arius cuts off all such channels, and leaves us with a subordinate created God as a commander-in-chief. Athanasius is therefore contending for a religious reality. But the theological setting in which he places his statement of this reality rests on the conception that the divine dispensation is essentially miraculous, and is set forth in a miraculously inspired literature whose statements, doctrinal and historical, are final.

We save the truth for which he contended when we cease to limit the historical revelation of Divine Sonship to a miraculous Jesus, and when we identify the Son of God, begotten of the essence of the Father, with *essential humanity*. By "essential humanity" we mean the true nature of man, understood as his *perfect nature*, fully wrought out in all its

powers, mental, social, and spiritual. In humanity, regarded thus *sub specie eternitatis*, we can find a place for the historical Jesus of Nazareth. For history, theology, and philosophy, he remains, in part, "a problem," unexhausted, and perhaps inexhaustible. But he is not only a problem. Everything is a problem so long as we adopt towards it the attitude of *investigation*, the attitude governed by the purely scientific interest. It is needless to say that this is not the only possible attitude, and that it must sometimes give place to other attitudes. A sunset of Turner can be appreciated as well as analysed; and the Jesus of the Gospels can be a religious force as well as an historical problem.

Our present purpose, however, is to gain as full an understanding as is possible of the position held by Athanasius against the Arians. Our most important sources will be the first three of the *Orationes contra Arianos*, and the treatises *De Incarnatione* and *De Decretis* (the latter in defence of the Nicene definitions).

Arius does not seek to abolish the use of the traditional term of "Son" in reference to Jesus Christ, but he empties it of its traditional meaning. He insists that sonship is a human relationship implying definite mental and physical facts. These mental and physical facts are so bound up with the meaning of sonship that the whole idea becomes unworkable and unthinkable in reference to the

Divine. It follows that neither Christ nor any other being can truly be a "son of God." This criticism appears to be on the same plane with a recent utterance of Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, that if we speak of God as "Father" we imply that He is "a mature person of the male sex." We shall see how Athanasius deals with the difficulty, such as it is.

II.

Arius distinguishes two orders of existence, the Uncreated and the Created; he assumes that the two alternatives are mutually exclusive and together exhaustive of all being. The sole uncreated Being is the infinite and transcendent God; all other beings, and Christ first of all, were created "out of nothing." Athanasius insists that *to regard these alternatives as exhaustive is to miss the essence of Christianity*. Christianity introduced a new idea—the idea of true Sonship to God. His treatment of the Divine Sonship as a theological conception shows that in his mind it assumed the form of a "first principle" of religion, historically realized only in the Incarnation, but capable of being investigated as a principle of a general kind.

Athanasius is aware that Sonship, in its reference to the Divine, is an ideal symbol, an image illustrative of something too great for adequate formulation. Every such image is

incomplete in one or another of its aspects, but none the less it may suggest truth. He states his conviction that since God contains in himself all perfection, He contains the perfection of every relationship among created things; and that some aspect of the perfect and eternal Divine Generation is reflected, as it were, in each of the various kinds of natural generation found among created things.

In human generation or sonship three things are present—bodily form and feeling; priority of the parent in time; and community and equality of nature (in a sense the parent exists in the child). This third element is the essential one; and this is the meaning of the Divine Sonship. The relation of priority in time, involved in human parenthood, applies to the Supreme Being as little as limitations of bodily form or feeling. "What is there," asks Athanasius, "to prevent God from always being the Father of the Son?" In the essential point, unity and continuity of nature, the illustration from human fatherhood is best; but in reference to the eternal co-existence of the Father and the Son, he appeals to the image of the Radiance generated from the Light or the Fountain from the Source. Thus the Son is "Eternal Radiance from Eternal Light." The generation of the Son is assumed to be an eternal and unalterable fact in the Divine Nature.

The famous traditional phrase, "The Word,"

is likewise only an illustrative image. Athanasius observes that if we only knew that Christ is "Word" we might suppose him to be an impersonal quality of the Father; but when we know that he is also Son, we know that he is living Word and realized Wisdom. The value of the illustration is to indicate that the Son is not generated by any kind of division or separation. The Father does not lose in the generation of the Son, but completes his Divinity therein, just as human reason does not lose but actually gains when it expresses itself in rational utterance. The ideas which find rational expression themselves become more clear and strong. All finite spiritual things increase only by self-giving. And since in Deity we have not the finite, but the perfect and complete, we have the eternal completion of the Godhead of the Father in the Son.

Implicated in this position we find a philosophical principle of an abstract but extremely important character, which has been emphasized both in ancient and modern thought, and which Harnack with extraordinary perversity describes as "a contradiction in terms." The principle is that unity and difference, both in logic and in life, are involved in one another. Before you can assert unity you must make a distinction; and if all distinction disappears, the unity disappears too. You cannot have the one without the other any more than you can have a geometrical

figure without drawing lines to make it. Athanasius discusses this in an interesting passage in his fourth Oration against the Arians. He says that if we try to understand the divine relationship of the Father and the Son, we find three possibilities. In the first place, the Father and the Son may be two names for one being. This is unity without real difference, and is the error of Sabellius, who admitted no distinct existence for the Son. In the second place, the Father and the Son may be two Gods. This is difference without real unity. It is equivalent to Polytheism, and is the logical issue of Arianism. In the third place, Father and Son may be *co-essential*. This is unity *in* difference; this is the doctrine of Athanasius and (as he thinks) of Scripture also. He expressly says that if the two are one, then the duality and the unity must be equally essential.

An illustration is found in the famous saying, "I and my Father are One." Athanasius refuses to admit that this implies merely such harmony of thought and will as is possible between two separate persons. By progress in goodness, created beings may imitate the Divine, as is indicated in Scripture (he refers to such passages as Matt. v. 48, Luke vi. 36, 1 Peter i. 15, Levit. xix. 2). Created beings may have this agreement with their Maker, but only as it were "by endowment," or by being permitted to share in the Divine in-

fluence. We shall see in the sequel how far Athanasius succeeds in abiding by this theory of an essential difference between all "created" beings, even up to the highest archangel, and "the Son." In the meantime it is sufficient to notice how he illustrates his view from the text before us. Jesus does not say "I *am* the Father" (two names for one being). Neither does he say, "I *am* and the Father *is*" or "I and the Father *are*" (two beings). He says, "I and the Father are One." The pronoun "I" signifies the Son; "and the Father" refers to Him who begat the Son; "One" signifies the co-essentiality of the two in the unity of the Godhead. Athanasius holds that if this conception is rejected, we are confined between the opposite extremes of Sabellianism and Arianism (or polytheism). These extremes correspond in principle to the philosophical alternative of extreme Pantheism and extreme Deism.

III.

Fundamental in the thought of Athanasius is the distinction between the meaning of Creation and the meaning of Sonship. On this point turns his whole theory of the distinction between Jesus Christ (as the Incarnate Son) and mankind. It is the nature of the Son to be "from the essence of the Father," and co-essential with Him, just as it is the nature of the Father eternally to complete His

divinity in the Son. The very idea of perishing or "ceasing to be" is as inapplicable to the Son as it is to the Father.

With created things it is very different. "Out of nothing, without their having had any previous existence, God made all things to exist through His Word" (that is, through the Son). The reference to creation "through the Son" requires no special comment. Unity of nature, in the case of the Father and the Son, involves unity of operation. But the position assigned to the created things is significant. It is the nature of created things to be "from nothing." They are all, in spite of their many degrees of difference, on the same level of existence. They all, as it were, possess the same degree of reality. But above all else he emphasizes the fact that every created thing, since it was brought into being out of nothing, is by nature transient, and incapable of permanence *if depending on itself alone*. In effect Athanasius defines a created thing as that which by nature tends to pass out of being.

From this conception of creation he draws a fallacious conclusion; and this conclusion has played a part in some quite recent assumptions made on behalf of the doctrine of the Trinity. God was not always a Creator. He was a Creator only *in posse* before the origination of finite things. This, says Athanasius, must be so, because created things had a beginning,

and did not exist in any way before their beginning, and by their nature tend to perish. It is clear that even if we assume the Athanasian view of what is meant by creation, this conclusion does not follow. However transient any particular being is, it is clear that there may be an infinite series of such beings. In other words, God may have been always a Creator. The visible world—or even the visible universe—may have an absolute beginning and an absolute end, while none the less other worlds and other universes may still be produced by the eternally creative Power. There is no occasion, therefore, for falling back on a Trinitarian doctrine in order to avoid the assumption of a “lonely God.”

We return, however, to follow the development of the conception of Creation as Athanasius sets it forth in reference to the actual world. If created things, left to themselves, would tend to perish, this is only an abstract view. They are never left to themselves. “The exceeding goodness of the Living God does not grudge anything, much less existence; He desires all to exist as objects for His goodness.” Hence every created thing, animate or inanimate, is permitted to participate in the Divine Nature; otherwise, nothing could remain in existence. This participation is an endowment, additional to that of mere creation, and separable in idea from it; and, like the work of creation, it

is effected through the Eternal Son. Thus the downward tendency, belonging to the nature of the created or the finite, is counteracted by the upward tendency of the Divine Life in which all beings participate. Thus alone is produced the unity, harmony, and order of all the multitudinous parts of the universe.

In the case of mankind, it follows that the gulf originally made between "the Son" and "the creatures" becomes much less wide and deep. All men, from the beginning of the human race, share in the Divine Life. There is in us all, as it were, a conscious image or impress of the Wisdom of God which pervades all things—the Wisdom which Athanasius identifies with the Son of God. It is for this reason alone that we are able to become rational and moral beings, and to recognize the Wisdom pervading the cosmos, and to rise to a knowledge of God as the Source of all Being and of ourselves as made in the Image of God. For Athanasius, no man is merely a "creature." He would never have spoken of a "mere man." What later theology marks off as an exclusively supernatural gift is, according to him, inalienable from human nature; it can be impaired but not lost.

Man is thus saved from the metaphysical penalty of the mere created thing—the downward movement to non-existence. But he is not so far saved from the consequences of mis-

using his own will. The will of man can sway to either side. We float on the sea of life as with the wind, but within limits we can direct our course. The human race began to choose the worse in preference to the better; and in this rejection of the better thing, all the vice and evil of the soul consists. Here again we find that Athanasius lays down certain principles which, *as principles*, are not far from some of the positions reached by modern thought. His historical application of these principles is determined by his acceptance of the legend of the Fall as history. The Fall is to him the great crisis in the history of man—the source of an increasing evil which spreads as a disease spreads.

His view of the condition of man in Paradise is not that of the ordinary evangelical tradition about “unfallen man.” Athanasius assumes that in Paradise man led a life, free indeed from pain and sorrow and care, but not perfect, though it involved the *promise* of “incorruption” (perfection) in Heaven. The Fall did not bring bodily death into a world where it was not, but filled death with a dark and terrible significance which it had not before. The full possibilities of humanity were not realized in Paradise. Man was created not perfect, but with a capacity for perfection, and with a destiny to correspond to that capacity. This destiny remains in force as much after the Fall as before.

The consequences of the Fall are summed up by Athanasius in two metaphorical terms, "Death" and "Corruption." He does not mean mere bodily death, nor even "metaphysical death" or annihilation of the soul. "Conditional" immortality is not a possible belief for Athanasius, who strongly affirms the immortality of the human soul as such, and defends it by argument. The terms in question are probably used to signify that condition into which the soul passes through persistent *rejection of the better*—a condition from which the distinctive characteristics of ethical and spiritual humanity are absent—a life which has ceased to be fully human and in that sense is Death. A "personification" of Death takes the place of the Devil in the Athanasian view of the Atonement.

"It is monstrous," he declares, "to suppose that creatures once made rational, and sharing in the life of the Divine Word, should go to ruin and turn again to the downward path that leads to corruption and death, whether by their own carelessness or the deceitfulness of evil spirits. . . . Otherwise, what is the use of man having been made originally in God's Image? It had been better for him to have been made simply like a brute animal, than for him, once made rational, to live the life of the brutes. . . . God made man for Himself, for a destiny not other than Divine."

IV.

We now have the fundamental principles of the Athanasian position before us, and we are ready to estimate their significance. On the one hand, we find the conception of the Eternal Son firmly held as a matter of religious conviction and philosophical reasoning; on the other hand, we find the conception that the essential fact about Humanity—quite part from the Incarnation—is its participation in the Divine Nature. In his earlier writings, sometimes at least, Athanasius inclined to think of this participation as an endowment from without, a “gift of grace.” But through time he came to regard man’s distinctive characteristics, from which his divine destiny springs, as inalienable from the constitution of humanity, hence rather as “nature” than as “grace.” This means that the gulf between “the Son” (begotten from the nature of the Father) and mankind (creatures made from nothing) is still further reduced.

Nevertheless human history for Athanasius is no story of gradual ascent. The Fall did not, indeed, mean a sudden and complete loss of the Divine endowment; and there have been men in past ages “free from all sin.” But the Fall brought about a gradual enfeeblement of man’s higher life; and from generation to generation mankind has been losing the consciousness of God. And yet the destiny of man remains the same. His destiny is deter-

mined by the Divine Goodness; and therefore Redemption is an inevitable Divine Work. It is like a Divine law in the nature of things that rational beings, made in the Image of God, shall be saved. Hence the Incarnation is a necessity. It is also a Divine law in the nature of things that sin leads to an actual condition of the soul, a kind of existence, described as "Death." Hence the manner of the Incarnation is also determined.

The Eternal Son of God, the Divine Word, has always been an indwelling force in humanity, and through his creative activity and abiding immanence has an inherent relation to the human race. But the increasing dominion of evil necessitates his entering on a special relation to a world in which he had been always present—a concentrated and uniquely intense and effective relation. Only thus can the positive corruption, which is the inevitable creation of evil-doing, be counteracted. It is the inner life that is wrong, and only a new inner life can heal it. Repentance (change of mind) can make evil-doing to cease; but Athanasius does not believe that it can heal. Still less can a mere external act suffice, even though it were a Divine act; "if the curse had been removed by a word of power, there would, indeed, have been a manifestation of the power of God's word, but man would only have been the recipient from without of grace which had no real place within his person"

(*i.e.*, which was not an unfolding of his inherent capacities). Salvation is impossible except through a nature akin to our own; we can be redeemed only by that with which we have something in common. We are not delivered even by the Son of God, unless it is a natural human life which the Son of God lived on earth. Salvation is impossible *except through man*. But it is equally true that salvation is impossible *except from God*. A created being, as such, cannot save a created being, since both (as mere "creatures") are liable to the same danger. Hence salvation is the characteristic work of the Son of God, who is from the Father and therefore Divine by nature.

In estimating the value of this argument of Athanasius, we must remember that, on his own showing, there *are no* mere "creatures." His view is that the participation in the Divine Nature, which is co-extensive with creation, does not suffice for salvation; nothing less than an Incarnation is sufficient, where the naturally human is united to the naturally Divine. Experience and tradition taught Athanasius to find this Incarnation in the historic life of Jesus Christ.

The death of Christ is a part, but only a part, of the work of redemption. Christ did the work, not as a substitute for men, but as a *representative of man*. What this means is clear, as soon as we remember that for Athanasius the *unity of humanity* is primary and

fundamental. It is sometimes assumed that mankind consists of a multitude of units, merely existing together, like objects floating in the sea, now in contact, now separate; and that salvation is a process exclusively between the single soul and the Almighty, so that one could be "saved" even though every other one were eternally lost. Such assumptions would scarcely seem conceivable to Athanasius. "I and my fellow-man are one" is a saying nearer to his view of the truth. We are saved together, if we are saved at all; our salvation, being the joint work of a community, in which each of the members is active, in one spirit of loyalty to an end to be shared by all.

The Incarnation, therefore, brings the Divine Nature into a relationship *with all humanity*, and one which is of the widest consequence. The actual experiences of the Incarnate Son are real possibilities for us. "When he received the Spirit, it was we who were being made by him capable of receiving it." "He became man in order that we might become divine." And, as we become true followers of the Son of God, "we too by reason of our kinship with his body, become a Temple of God, and are made from henceforth sons of God."

For thirty years Athanasius was absorbed by his indefatigable endeavours to force the mind of the Church to feel the power of his great doctrine of Divine Sonship, and to

establish it from Scripture. It is almost true to say that during those years the doctrine of the Godhead was for him not a Trinity, but a Duality in Unity. But Scripture associates *three* groups of terms with the Godhead—"Father," "Son," and "Spirit," with their respective synonyms; and Scripture was assumed to be infallible. For this reason, and for this reason alone, a *three-term conception* of the Divine Nature fastened itself on the mind of the Church. If a fourth group of terms had been found in scripture, the orthodox doctrine would have been not a Trinity, but a "Quaternity." As soon as Athanasius gave his undivided attention to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, he was led to affirm of the Spirit what he had already affirmed of the Eternal Son, and then was faced by the problem of *distinguishing between the Spirit and the Son*. His distinctions are little more than verbal: in relation to the Father, the Son "is begotten," the Spirit "proceeds"; in relation to mankind the Son "redeems," the Spirit "sanctifies"; and so forth.

In this short essay we have not attempted to dwell on many details in the theological position of Athanasius. We have endeavoured to give an accurate account of his main principle, and of the consequences which, to his mind, flowed from it. In our first section we indicated a development of which this principle, by its very nature is capable, and

which seems to be required by the conditions of modern experience. This development we now resume in conclusion.

Man is not God; but there are capacities unfolded and unfolding in human nature which are essentially Divine. "While the earth remaineth," it is written, "summer and winter, heat and cold, seed-time and harvest, life and death, shall not cease." And while humanity remaineth, in this world or in any other there will remain those elemental desires and endeavours, those elemental trusts and affections, which are the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. These are at once the supremely distinctive human things, and "part of the very being of God—His perpetual self-revelation to us." Of this "Life within our life" we may say with entire truth all that Athanasius said of the Eternal Son of God—"from the nature" of the Father and "one in nature" with him.

V.

THE CATHOLICISM
OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

Born February 21st, 1801; died August 11th, 1890.

SUMMARY

I. Noticing briefly Newman's relation to the Oxford "Tractarian" movement, we observe the following personal characteristics: (i.) reverence for antiquity as such, a feeling which may rest on an historical illusion; (ii.) insistence on dogma as necessary and essential to religion: hence his conflict with "Liberalism."

II. In his *Essay on Development of Christian Doctrine*, after undermining the theory of "the Bible and the Bible only," he attempts to establish a theory of Development to prove the need and the reality of an infallible Authority guiding the process. The argument in part begs the question and in part rests on misapprehension of the necessity of the *negative* factor in Development.

III. In his *Grammar of Assent* he offers a true account of the state of mind called Belief and the ways in which Beliefs arise or die out: but he attempts to make the inertia of the feeling of practical certainty (without any appeal to general rational experience) into a test of truth. This is equivalent to Scepticism, offering *causes* of Belief instead of *reasons*.

IV. Scepticism avoided in the real basis of Newman's Theism: the witness of Conscience. Questions raised: Does Theism justify Belief without Reason? Is the world "implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity," "out of joint with the purposes of its Creator"?

V. Affinities and contrasts with Martineau. How far can we estimate the direction Newman's thought would have followed if freed from the bias of the dogmatic principle? Method of constructive criticism, in relation to the history of Christian thought, stated and defended.

THE CATHOLICISM OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

I.

THE early years of the nineteenth century marked the dawn of a new era in social, political, and religious thought. John Henry Newman thus wrote of it, in 1839, when as Vicar of St. Mary's Church in Oxford, and as University Preacher, his influence was approaching its height:—

It is not so much a movement as a *spirit afloat*, rising up in hearts where it was least suspected, and working itself, though not in secret, yet so subtly and impalpably as hardly to admit of precaution and encounter on any ordinary rules of opposition: it is the spiritual awakening of spiritual wants.

The spiritual awakening went far beyond the bounds of religion as ordinarily understood; but one of its issues was a movement of religious thought the influence of which is living yet. Its historic centre was the University of Oxford in the third decade of the century, where it led to a revolt against the "dry and superficial religious teaching," the "traditional Church-of-Englandism," the "high Toryism," which in the view of such men as Keble, New-

man, and Froude, were making the Church like the dry bones in the valley of Ezekiel's vision. The revolt was the famous "Tractarian" movement, which Newman led during the first eight years of its existence (1833-41). It was, we repeat, an awakening of religious thought, not merely of thought about religion; but owing to the temper of its leaders it became reactionary. The spirit of reaction in the Church of England always begins—when it is strong and vigorous—by disavowing the Reformation, and is prepared to go much further in the same direction.

The divergence of the movement from the ideals of Anglicanism was fully revealed in 1841, when Newman published a Tract in which he endeavoured to show that the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church were not contrary to anything essential or distinctive of Roman doctrine, but were only directed against popular exaggerations and perversions of it. This caused a great division among the adherents of the movement, and many who had been its friends ceased to countenance it. Some even joined in the denunciations which the Evangelicals had from the beginning poured upon its "drift towards Rome." Newman had been trying to defend the system of what he called "Catholic Truth"—by which he meant the Catholicism of the Fathers, anterior to the division of East and West—as a *via media* between Romanism on the one hand and

“popular Protestantism” on the other; but four years more of reflection convinced him that the grounds and reasons for which he accepted the system of “Catholic Truth” as authoritative required him to accept also the whole system of Papal Catholicism. In 1845 he sought admission into the Church of Rome—a step in which he was followed by a hundred and fifty prominent clergymen and laymen.

This matter is of much more than merely historical interest. Newman stands for types of thought and feeling which are still strong and which require to be understood.

One of Newman’s most marked characteristics was an inborn reverence for antiquity—above all, of course, for Christian antiquity. Thus in the *Apologia* he says, speaking of his thoughts during the years 1832:—

With the Establishment, thus threatened and divided, I contrasted the fresh vigorous power in the first centuries, of which I was reading; . . . I ever kept before me that there was something greater than the Established Church, and that was the Church Catholic and Apostolic, set up from the beginning.

There is in history what Renan has called a kind of optical illusion. The present century is always seen through a cloud of dust raised by the whirl of actual life; and we can scarcely distinguish, in this whirlwind, the real signs of the time or the heart and mind of the age. This crowd of transitory interests has vanished from before the Past, which thus appears to us grave, severe, disinterested. Looking at it

by means of its books and monuments only—in other words, as manifested in its thought—we are tempted to believe that people did nothing else than think. The noise of the street, the stir of the market-place, and all the temporal interests and motives which sometimes ruled its thought, do not come down to posterity. Whether this be the reason or no, it is certain that there are many who, like Newman, have no feeling for the values of the Present as compared with the values of the Past; they try to make themselves children of the Past, and sometimes of a Past that is dead. We must try to make ourselves children of a Past that is living, and of a Present that is destined to live.

Equally important with Newman's reverence for the Past was his feeling of the *essential* function of dogma in religion. In the *Apologia* he says:—

From the age of fifteen, dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion; I cannot enter into the idea of any other sort of religion. Religion as a mere sentiment is to me a dream and a mockery.

The justice of the last remark may be fully granted. Religion involves *ideas* as well as feelings and actions; and in these days the demand is that the ideas shall be far more clearly and thoroughly *thought out*. There are many to-day who write and speak as if they had forgotten this. It almost seems as if they imagined that religious ideas, religious *thought*

in the proper sense, were of no importance. In some cases this even leads to mistaking vagueness and confusion of mind for spirituality.

The work of rational thought, in expressing the meaning and grounds of religion and so producing religious doctrine, is a necessary part of religion itself. On the other hand, we do not say that it is the essential part of religion. But Cardinal Newman insisted that it is the essential part and moreover that it does not fulfil its perfect work until its findings are accepted as absolutely true. For this reason he used the word *dogma* instead of *doctrine*, and for this reason also he declared that his battle was *against Liberalism, i.e., the anti-dogmatic principle and its developments*.

This principle he applied to the traditional theological contents of Christianity—the existence of a personal God, His miraculous Incarnation, and His various relations to man in this life and the next, together with the numerous subordinate doctrines flowing from these. We must be sure that we have each of these dogmas in a form which is perfectly accurate and absolutely true. In seeking an authority for this complex dogmatic system, Newman was gradually driven to the haven of Roman Catholic infallibility. The root of the matter lay in his failure to distinguish between religion itself and a particular expression of it in doctrine and ritual. In consequence of this,

his deeply religious nature and earnest desire for real conviction led him to regard dogma as of supreme importance; and this again led him to the Church of Rome.

II.

Newman's own view of this regressive movement is set forth in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. While he was completing this book he was thinking himself into the Roman Catholic Church.

It is quite in the modern spirit in its way of approaching the problem; it views the history in the light of the idea of Development. Christian doctrine was not given to the world originally in a perfect form. "The principle of Development," he says, "is discernible from the first years of Catholic teaching up to the present day, and gives to that teaching a unity and individuality." But the conclusion is not at all in the modern spirit. It is—as he expresses it in the *Apologia*—that this principle (development) "served as a sort of test, which the Anglicans could not exhibit, that modern Rome was in truth ancient Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople"—"an argument in favour of the identity of Roman and primitive Christianity." His position is that either the Roman developments of Christianity are the true ones, or the whole history of doctrine is a history of gradual corruption.

He first disposes of the Protestant principle of "The Bible and the Bible only." He had been educated, chiefly through his mother's influence, into a deep and sincere reverence for the Bible: this never left him, but it changed its form. He saw that it is plainly absurd to appeal to the Bible as an infallible source of doctrine. In the *Essay* of which we are now speaking, he shows¹ how it is impossible to abide by the mere letter of the books, if only because we need to *understand* the letter—for instance in such a phrase as "the Word became Flesh"—and this gives rise to many further questions, especially as the structure of the books is so unsystematic and various, and their style so figurative and indirect. He shows that orthodox Protestantism is under a delusion when it supposes that all its doctrines are taught in the Bible, or even that they may be easily and plainly deduced from its words. In the *Apologia* he observes that what the mere Protestant does is to take "a large system of theology" and "apply it to Scripture"—read into the words of the book a system derived from, and given to him by, the historical development of the Christian Church and Creed. Other fundamental questions such as the extent of the Canon and the limits of Inspiration, cannot be settled by appeal to the Bible, for the Prophets and Apostles gave no decision about them.

¹ Ch. ii. § i. and ii.

Lastly, he points out that to appeal to the Bible is not to escape the uncertainty of appealing to an authority which is *growing*; for within the Biblical religion itself there is a development through the Prophets to Jesus, whose words are in their turn developed by the apostles: "the whole truth, or large portions of it, are told, yet only in their rudiments, or in miniature; and they are expanded and finished in their parts as the course of revelation proceeds." Similarly, "in the apostolic teaching, no historical point can be found at which the growth of doctrine ceased." To recognize that growth involves not only expansion and completion of detail, but the dying away of old forms, would turn the statements just quoted into expressions of the modern view of evolution as regards Hebraism and Christianity. But Newman failed to see the importance of what we have called the "negative element" in development. To this point we shall have to return immediately.

His conclusion is, that the Bible was never intended to teach doctrine but only to *prove* it, and that if we would learn doctrine we must have recourse to the formularies of the Church. This view, he had long before decided, was "self-evident to those who have at all examined the structure of Scripture." He says:—

We are told that God has spoken. Where? In a book? We have tried it and it disappoints; it disappoints us, that

most holy and blessed gift, not from fault of its own, but because it is used for a purpose for which it was not given. The Ethiopian's reply, when St. Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading, is the voice of Nature: "How can I, unless some man shall guide me?"

But the distinction between "teaching" and "proving" doctrine from the Bible is not very clear. If it is true that any one can find in the words of the book any doctrine which he is determined to find there—and Newman seems implicitly to admit this, within limits—it is also true that by similar determination any doctrine can be proved from the book.

Against those who would maintain that the developments of ecclesiastical theology have been a series of "corruptions of Christianity," he adduces "notes" by which a true development may be distinguished from a corrupt growth:—

The point to be ascertained is the unity and identity of the idea with itself through all stages of its development, from first to last; to guarantee this substantial unity, it must be seen to be one in type; one in its system of principles; one in its assimilative power towards externals; one in its logical consecutiveness; one in the witness of its earlier phases to its later; one in the protection which its later extend to its earlier; and one in its union of vigour with continuance, that is, in its tenacity.¹

On this doctrine two remarks must be made.

The attempt to apply any theory of development to justify the actual claim of the Church to be infallible is suicidal: for the notion of infallibility, and the supposed in-

¹ *Essay*, chapter v., at end.

fallible guide, are themselves products of the development, and therefore cannot be final. As Newman says himself, "no historical point can be found at which the growth of doctrine ceased and the rule of faith was once for all settled." But he affirms that the infallible authority, outside the development, *must* have existed from the beginning, to provide a means of distinguishing true developments from false, for the benefit of individuals who were *in* the development, and therefore were unable to see the issues of the movements of thought around them. We reply that this insight is of course the gift of the Teacher or Prophet—the gift of ethical or spiritual genius, which always varies in its degrees. Newman's attempt to prove the reality of the "infallible" guide is too feeble to be intelligibly summarized. No doubt such an infallible and openly accessible authority, guiding the progress of Thought, would have been and would still be very useful; but we can scarcely on that account assume its reality. The idea itself is a late product of the growth of ecclesiasticism.

Newman overlooks an essential condition of growth, if he does not altogether exclude it by his sixth "note." In a genuine development of ideas the new truth often abrogates the old and takes its place. We have not merely—as Newman seems to say—a gradual expansion and growing complication of detail

in old ideas; we have a new interpretation of old experiences. Every significant idea or thought is—or in its origin was—an interpretation of some experience. New enterprises and experiences of man's soul require new ideas to express their meaning; and these shed new light on old experiences and call for new and truer interpretations of *them*. Old interpretations, old forms of expression, become useless and have to be cast off; they may survive—they may even be religiously preserved intact and repeated as Divine truth, but they soon become a mere form of words: the meaning which once gave them life has gone. Thus the development of Christian doctrine cannot claim to be specially rational; there is nothing in its nature to prevent errors, fictions, and even degrading superstitions from becoming an integral part of it.

III.

It would seem that Newman regarded the argument from history, by itself, as inadequate. He reinforces it by a fundamental doctrine of the nature and foundations of Belief. We shall see that in this matter he departed far from the official doctrine of his Church, as laid down for instance by the Vatican Council of 1870: *Sancta Mater Ecclesia tenet et docet Deum . . . naturali humanæ rationis lumine e rebus creatis certo cognosci posse*: the being of God may be

known with certainty from His created works by the unaided reason of man.

The outlines of Newman's own doctrine can be clearly traced in his earlier writings. A recurring thought in the *University Sermons* is that we do not become aware of religious truth by *conscious investigation*. No analysis is subtle and delicate enough to represent adequately the state of mind under which we believe. It is inevitable that the evidence which can be given for most of our beliefs should appear insufficient or inconclusive, because the only "evidence" is an analysis of the process which produced the belief.

On such facts Newman builds up a theory that it is a law of our nature to form settled beliefs on inconclusive evidence, to feel a certainty disproportioned to the evidence which can be explicitly produced to justify it.

This argument is elaborated in his *Grammar of Assent*, written after he had been many years in the Church of Rome. The general position is, that Belief is a substantial state of mind with characteristics of its own, and does not vary in strength as the reasons for it vary. Belief may remain when the reasons for it are forgotten:—

It is plain that, as life goes on, we are not only inwardly formed and changed by the accession of habits, but we are also enriched by a great multitude of beliefs and opinions, and that on a variety of subjects. These, held, as some of them are, almost as first principles, constitute as it were the furniture and clothing of the mind. Sometimes we are fully conscious of them; some-

times they are implicit, or only now and then come directly before our reflective faculty. Still they are beliefs, and when we first admitted them we had some kind of reason, slight or strong, recognized or not, for doing so. However, whatever those reasons were, even if we ever realized them, we have long forgotten them. Whether it was the authority of others, or our own observation, or our reading, or our reflections which became the warrant of our belief, anyhow we received the matters in question into our minds, and gave them a place there. We believed them and we still believe, though we have forgotten what the warrant was. At present they are self-sustained in our minds, and have been so for long years.

Belief may fail or die away without tangible reasons sufficient to account for its failure:—

Our reasons may seem to us as strong as ever, yet they do not secure our assent. Our beliefs, founded on them, were and are not; we cannot perhaps tell when they went; we may have thought that we still held them, until something happened to call our attention to the state of our minds. Sometimes of course a cause may be found why they went; there may have been some vague feeling that a fault lay at the ultimate basis, or in the underlying conditions, of our reasonings; or some misgiving that the subject-matter of them lay beyond the reach of the human mind; or a consciousness that we had gained a broader view of things in general than when we first gave our assent; or that there were strong objections to our first convictions which we had never taken into account. But this is not always so; sometimes our mind changes so quickly, so unaccountably, so disproportionately to any tangible arguments to which the change can be referred, and with such abiding recognition of the force of the old arguments, as to suggest the suspicion that moral causes, arising out of our condition, age, company, occupations, fortunes, are at the bottom. However, what once was assent is gone; yet the perception of the old arguments remains, showing that inference is one thing and belief another.

Belief may be withheld in spite of strong and convincing arguments:—

We sometimes find men loud in their *admiration* of truths

which they never profess. As, by the law of our mental constitution, obedience is quite distinct from faith, and men may believe without practising, so is belief also independent of our acts of inference. Very numerous are the cases in which good arguments, confessed by us to be good, nevertheless are not strong enough to incline our minds ever so little to the conclusion at which they point. But why is it that we do not believe a little, in proportion to those arguments? On the contrary, we throw the full *onus probandi* on the side of the conclusion, and we refuse to believe it at all until we can believe it altogether. The proof is capable of growth; but the belief either exists or does not exist.¹

The characteristics of the highest state of assurance, or "certitude," are thus described:

No one can be called *certain* of a proposition whose mind does not spontaneously and promptly reject, on their first suggestion, as idle, as impertinent, as sophistical, any objections which are directed against its truth. No man is certain of a truth who can endure the thought of the fact of its contradictory existing or occurring; and that not from any set purpose or effort to reject that thought, but, as I have said, by the spontaneous action of the intellect. What is contradictory to the truth fades out of the mind, with its apparatus of argument, as fast as it enters it; and though it be brought back to the mind ever so often by the pertinacity of an opponent, or by a voluntary or involuntary act of imagination, still that contradictory proposition and its arguments are mere phantoms and dreams, in the light of our certitude, and their very entering into the mind is the first step of their going out of it. Such is the state of our minds towards the heathen fancy that Enceladus lies under Etna, or (not to take so extreme a case) that Joanna Southcote was a messenger from heaven, or the Emperor Napoleon really had a star. Equal to this peremptory assertion of negative propositions is the revolt of the mind from suppositions incompatible with positive statements of which we are certain, whether abstract truths or facts: as that a straight line is the longest possible distance between its two extreme points, that Great Britain is in shape an exact square or circle, that I shall escape dying, or that my intimate friend is false to me.

¹ *Grammar of Assent*, ch. vi. § 2.

All this is evidently true if taken simply as a description of our state of mind when we "believe" and of the ways in which beliefs arise or die out. But Newman offers it also as a test of the truth of the belief. The test of firm belief, that we cannot think the opposite, he takes as the test of truth. The settled conviction that we have hold of the truth and can give some reasons for it, is sufficient evidence that we have hold of it in reality. We find that the mind can form beliefs which—after investigation has confirmed their probability—become irreversible and are accompanied by a specific sense of intellectual satisfaction and repose. What is more natural than to suppose that those beliefs in which the mind can *rest* must be *true*, and when it is possible to rest in them unconditionally, must be *absolutely* true?

Yet the test fails. The spontaneous "rejection of the opposite" is a fair psychological test of the firmest sort of belief. But to make this a test of truth is to shut our eyes to any further evidence that may be forthcoming. The reasonable person would say that instead of rejecting suggestions incompatible with such prepossessions, one is bound to welcome them and look for them with the most scrupulous impartiality. This simple consideration is fatal to the very purpose of Newman's argument. The purpose is to show how, while we cannot *prove* that the Catholic

Church or any other institution is an infallible authority, we may yet feel certain that it is so, and rest in that certainty, if only we can find some probable reasons in its favour. But this is possible only when we shut our eyes to the multitude of probable reasons against it.

If the foregoing account represented all that Newman has to say about the foundations of belief, then his conclusion would in effect be total scepticism. The principle of scepticism is that we can find *causes* for our beliefs, but not *reasons*, or not adequate reasons. David Hume, for example, laboured to show that experience, by force of custom acting on our feeling and imagination, is able to produce a number of beliefs in us which are groundless. The true philosopher, therefore, yields gracefully to the impressions and maxims which he finds as a matter of fact have most sway over himself. Hume's scepticism extended even to those foundations of knowledge which appear to common sense to be obvious truths: "I may—nay, I must—yield to the current of nature in submitting to my senses and understanding, and in this blind submission I show most perfectly my sceptical principles"; for, after all, "if we believe that fire warms and water refreshes, 'tis only because it costs us too much pains to think otherwise!" Newman's belief in an Infallible Source of religious truth would seem to rest on a basis no more secure.

IV.

It was, however, impossible for Newman to regard his theory of the foundations of belief as leading to scepticism. It was impossible, because all his inquiries were conducted in the light of one central conviction which never passed out of his mind. This was his firm assurance that Conscience, meaning our consciousness of moral obligation, the authoritative claim which duty and right make upon us, affords direct evidence of the existence of God as a personal intelligent moral Governor of the world. The following statements, from his *Apologia*, are typical of many others:—

The being of God is as certain to me as the certainty of my own existence, though when I try to put the grounds of that certainty into logical shape I find difficulty in doing so . . . I am far from denying the real force of the arguments in proof of a God drawn from the general facts of human society and the course of history, but these do not warm me or enlighten me . . . I find it impossible to believe in my own existence without believing in Him who lives as a personal all-seeing, all-judging Being in my conscience.

This witness of Conscience is the one deep belief in which Cardinal Newman is at one with his brother Francis William, the Non-Christian Theist, and with James Martineau, the Unitarian Christian. The evidence of Conscience has an extremely important place in Newman's system. For having thus arrived at belief in a ruling *moral* Power, and since Truth is of such great moral and spiritual

value, he feels entitled to assume that God will have provided for man's attainment of truth, not merely by "revelation," but by so forming the natural constitution of man's mind that he *can* attain it, and *will* attain it in the end. We may therefore trust our beliefs, even though we cannot express in any rational form their causes and grounds. This invites comparison with the thought, frequently expressed to-day, that though intellectual and moral truths are the products of natural evolution, or even of mere natural selection, yet we can trust those truths if evolution is a divine method.

Newman suggests the argument more than once in the *Grammar of Assent*. We may express it in another form—a form which he would have repudiated, but which nevertheless brings out its main point. If we may believe that *the constitution or framework of the world*, including that of man's mind, is rational in the deeper sense of the word, in which morality itself is rational—if the world is intelligible and is a harmony—we may also believe that the laws and principles of thought which are *necessary* to understand it must be reliable; we may believe too that nothing irrational can *permanently* survive, and that our minds will not be able to rest for ever in falsehood. But such a Faith in a rationality of the Whole is a desperate leap in the dark unless we can find some traces of rationality in the parts; and when Cardinal Newman looked

out of himself into the world, we have his own verdict on what he saw:—

I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress; the world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth of which my whole being is full [the revelation of God through Conscience]. . . . To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of men, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship—their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements; the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things as if from unreasoning elements and not towards final causes; the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity; the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish; the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, having no hope, and without God in the world—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal, and inflicts on the mind the sense of a profound mystery which is absolutely beyond human solution. . . . Either then there is no Creator or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from his presence. . . . If there be a God, since there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity; it is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator.'

If then it were the merciful will of the Creator to interfere, what methods would he naturally employ? Since the world is in so abnormally evil, so anarchical a state, it is inevitable that the interposition should be equally abnormal or miraculous. We need not, however, pursue the argument further as Newman presents it.

If human progress is the slow growth of

man's powers, wisdom and goodness, then we should expect to find in the world all the signs of small beginnings and slow struggling achievements; but we should not expect this of the directly miraculous interpositions of an Omnipotent Being acting on the world from outside. If there has been such an intervention to save men, experience shows that it must have been contending with obstacles almost as strong as itself.

If we want to consider what human failure and sin imply, we must consider their place in human experience as a whole. We must consider human capacities altogether. And the most striking and deeply significant of man's capacities is this—that he is always rising above all his past experiences and past achievements or failures, and judging them, or reading their worth in the light of something better. Psychology and history unite to tell us that this could never be, were there not a constant self-communication of the divine Life to man, and self-revelation of the Eternal Reason¹.

V.

It is the business of a biographer to trace, if possible, all the many concrete influences which moved a mind like that of John Henry

¹ Here the first and second Essays in this book may be referred to again.

Newman and led him to rest in Roman Catholicism. In this Essay we have been concerned only with Newman's religious thought. In the light of his own wonderful *Apologia pro Vita sua* we have analysed some of the more important of the influences which moved him. And in the light of his *Grammar of Assent* we affirm with confidence that the most fundamental of these influences was from within, and consisted in the unchanging and apparently inborn conviction that dogma, in the sense defined, is of the essential structure of religion, which therefore involves absolute certainty in its doctrinal formulation. Religious liberalism, in all its forms, involves the rejection of this conviction; and with a true instinct Newman declared war for ever against liberalism.

To discuss what "might have been" is rarely profitable even when possible; but in this case I venture to attempt it. If Newman had been free from the mental bias which we have described, can we guess on what line his religious thought would have moved? The basis of it all—the witness of Conscience to God—would have been undisturbed. But he would not have sought the living among the dead, a living faith among the ruins of old creeds; he would have heard the call of the Lord of Truth bidding us follow Him into a grander world of larger and more satisfying knowledge. On the other hand, his profound

interest and insight into the historic movement of Christianity would have remained. He would not have turned away from all that men have thought about God and Duty and Eternal Life as if it were a mere accumulation of error. He would have tried to take possession of these "errors," and find the good that was in them—the truth that made them survive. He would have realized that every faith which is widely and devoutly believed, from generation to generation, must have some degree of truth in it, worth searching for and preserving. This is, of course, the reason why it is believed—why men cling to it and even fight for it against what seems to be destroying it. And what we want is for old faiths to be recast into new forms, with their deeper meaning shining through more clearly; the form changing, the old spirit remaining to grow more pure and high.

Martineau is at one with Newman in his view of Conscience as the natural basis of Theism. His contrast to Newman consists of course in his giving up the principle of absolute or infallible dogma, so that no authority outside the soul seems to be needed. But he rejects the dogmatic principle, not in favour of our principle that doctrines are *imperfect* expressions of religious realities. He rejects the historical forms of doctrine, because he believes that criticism has shown them to be a baseless fabric of human invention:—

Christianity, as defined or understood in all the Churches which formulate it, has been mainly evolved from what is transient and perishable in its sources, from what is unhistorical in its traditions, mythological in its preconceptions, and misapprehended in the oracles of its prophets. From the fable of Eden to the imagination of the last trumpet, the whole story of the Divine order of the world has been dislocated and deformed. The blight of birth-sin with its involuntary perdition; the scheme of expiatory redemption with its vicarious salvation, the Incarnation with its low postulates of the relation between God and Man, and its unworkable doctrine of two natures in one person; the official transmission of grace through material elements in the keeping of a consecrated corporation; the second coming of Christ to summon the dead and part the sheep from the goats at the general judgment—all are the growth of a mythical literature, or Messianic dreams, or Pharisaic theology, or sacramental superstition, or popular apotheosis.

This judgment almost implies a belief, like that of the late Emile Zola, in an inherited bias to falsity in human nature, such that men “love the lie” in preference to the truth. The judgment is exaggerated and even false. It is indeed implicitly corrected by Martineau himself. It is possible—if we admit that there may be *degrees of truth*—to find ethical and religious truths implicit in every fundamental dogma of the Christian system: Divine Judgment, Justification by Faith, Mediation, Divine Mercy and Forgiveness, Atonement, Vicarious Suffering, and above all in that grand achievement of Christian thought, the doctrine of the Incarnation of God in Man.

VI.

THE UNITARIANISM
OF JAMES MARTINEAU

Born April 21st, 1805; died January 11th, 1900.

SUMMARY

I. Martineau's religious and theological inheritance and his advance to a deeper point of view: the principle of Trust in our Faculties, which are to be explained but not explained away. The roots of religion in the Spiritual Faculties distinctive of mankind.

II. Search for the Seat of Authority in Religion: two stages of experience.

III. Search for the Seat of Authority in Religion: extension of the Incarnation idea from the person of Christ to the Nature of Man. Interpretation of this in terms of human Ideals. Distinctive types of religious experience. No merely *logical* road from man to God.

IV. The Religion of Conscience isolated as a type of ethical individualism. Untrue to facts of experience. Man's ancestral and social inheritance of evil and of good is part of his nature. Martineau's deeper view of the social union of men. Logical framework of the Religion of Conscience breaks down. Illustration from Newman's *Grammar of Assent*.

V. Transformation of the Religion of Conscience. Seat of Authority found in the distinctive characteristic of human experience: the perpetual presence of Ideals claiming to be embodied in the work of life.

THE UNITARIANISM OF JAMES MARTINEAU

THE life of James Martineau was so essentially the life of the thinker, and so typical of the century in which he lived, that he can be better understood through his spoken mind than through his outward history. But the mind of Martineau cannot be understood without some reference to the religious movement in which he was educated, and which was profoundly influenced by his life and work in after years.

I.

The Unitarianism of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was, on its technically philosophical side, based on an extreme exaggeration of Locke's teaching. Locke said that all the contents of our knowledge come from experience; *and by experience he meant the experience which our bodily senses give us.* This was exaggerated into the doctrine that the mind and everything in it—thought, feeling, conscience, affection—was

manufactured out of bodily sensations and sense-feelings. There was no such thing as the "soul." The bodily feelings and bodily senses, which were the foundation of all the many-sided world of mental life, belonged to the body and perished with it. Jesus was a miraculous man, commissioned by the Deity to give certain saving teachings to the world, with power to authenticate them by miracles; and the future life was a miraculous "rising from the dead."

Such was the doctrine of some of the most powerful religious thinkers in England in the generation immediately preceding that of Martineau. Priestley and Belsham may be named as the most eminent examples: the way had been largely prepared by David Hartley, whose name is famous in the history of English psychology.

Nevertheless their conviction of God was intense; so intense that in their interpretation of it no room for human agency was left. They said that to the true Christian every day is a Sabbath, every place a Temple, every act an act of Worship; that the good man sees God in everything, and everything in God, and feels only the deepest humility, the utmost resignation to His Will. The words are almost quoted from Priestley; and they were no mere commonplaces, as uttered by him. Two months after he had spoken in this strain of the best of life being a "kind of union with

God, feeling in some measure the same sentiments, and having the same views"—the Meeting-house in which he preached had been burnt, his home wrecked, his library, his scientific apparatus, and hundreds of precious manuscripts destroyed. This frightful calamity, the result of a senseless outbreak of mob passion, he met in the very spirit of which his words had spoken.

It was a spirit pervading some of the finest minds in those days. Hartley, Priestley, Belsham, and many others were full of it. Take no thought of self, said Hartley; ascribe everything to God, whose sole energy fills and guides the worlds, and blends the conflicting passions of men into one ultimate and universal Good.

The other side of their doctrine—their materialist view of human nature—was indeed a fatal source of weakness, and did much to spread indifference and stagnation in the life of the Churches. It could not dwell for long side by side with so noble a sense of God as these men held. One or the other must give way. This was what Martineau realized more and more vividly from the beginning of his Liverpool ministry in 1832.

The influence which Martineau desired to exert, and did greatly exert, on the movement known as Unitarian, could not be better defined than in a statement made by himself in 1838, shortly before the coronation of the young

Queen Victoria, when he attended a meeting called by the the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and moved the following resolution:—

“ That this meeting, in professing its attachment to Unitarian Christianity as at once scriptural and rational, and conducive to the true glory of God and well-being of man, and in avowing its veneration for the early British expositors and confessors of this faith, at the same time recognizes the essential worth of that principle of free inquiry to which we are indebted for our own form of Christianity, and of that spirit of deep and vital religion which may exist under various forms of theological sentiment, and which gave to our forefathers their implicit faith in truth, their love of God, and their reliance, for the improvement of mankind, on the influences of the gospel.”

In this resolution, three main points are emphasized:—(1) That Unitarian Christianity is scriptural, rational, and conducive to the true glory of God and well-being of man. (2) That there is something greater than Unitarian Christianity; and that is the spirit of fearless free inquiry, without which Unitarian Christianity could never have come to be. (3) That there is something greater even than Unitarian Christianity and free inquiry; and that is the spirit of deep and vital religion which may exist under many different forms of doctrinal belief. Ideal Christianity, for Martineau, was a union of these three principles, in which justice is done to each. The philosophical theology, on which he based his version of Christianity, has an interest and importance going far beyond the limits of any particular religious movement or denomination.

He is fond of speaking of our "highest desires and best affections." By this he meant those needs, feelings, and rational desires, which are distinctive of human nature as compared with animal life; the characteristics which most definitely distinguish us from the animal world. These human characteristics are facts, and any theory of the world claiming our acceptance must *explain them and not explain them away*. Hence ere long Martineau had totally rejected the system of mental philosophy, the theory of human nature, which he had learnt from books and venerated teachers, but which would not stand the test of life. If it is asked what system did he put in its place, the answer is, no system; but a conviction that the true system, when found, would be something far vaster, more complex and many-sided, than he had supposed. The general principle of the philosophy in which he rested—I say, its general principle, as distinguished from many of its detailed applications—may be summed up in a word, *Trust in our faculties*—not partial limited or one-sided trust, but impartial, all round confidence. We have as much right, he would have said, to trust in the Divine origin of the distinction between right and wrong, as we have to trust in the multiplication table; and if by observation, measurement, experiment, we learn the laws of Nature, it is by observation of another kind (but equally trustworthy) that we learn

the facts of the inner life which prompt us to believe in God. Hence, I repeat, Martineau's great purpose was to reach such a view of the world as will explain these facts, but not explain them away. His permanent fame, I believe, will rest above all on the splendid stand he made amid the upheavals of thought and tidal waves of doubt caused by the victories of Science over the secrets of physical Nature during the nineteenth century. In these great controversies, with an empirical science which claimed as its own the entire realm of reality, and with the materialism which was its logical outcome, Martineau evaded no issue and shirked no honest argument. Point by point, with exhaustive and penetrating criticism, he brought the weaknesses to light; and to him, as to no other man, the entire religious world is indebted for the turning of the tide, which seemed at one time to sweep the rational basis of spiritual faith away.¹

The principle of reasonable confidence in our faculties made it equally impossible for him to rest in the idea of God in which Hartley, Priestley, and their followers found consolation. It was really fatalism or predestination; it was Calvinism, divested of the belief in original sin and eternal torment. The experi-

¹ The writings to which I refer are all contained in the four volumes of Martineau's *Essays, Reviews, and Addresses*, and especially among the College Addresses printed in vol. iii., and the Theological and Philosophical Essays in vol. iv.

ences of actual life compel the conviction that we have some real power of individual self-control and self-direction—that there is a part of our life which not even God can live for us. None the less did Martineau to the last hold firmly to the sublime and inspiring thought of the Indwelling God:—

The Divine Life in relation to us presents itself as twofold, like our humanity; *natural*, so far as we are creatures subject to necessary laws and part of a determinate order; *supernatural*, so far as he has endowed us with spiritual capacities and affections open to his free appeal, and to our own responsive insight and direction under it. From this immediate communion of Spirit with Spirit, in which the initiative is with Him and the answer with us, no soul is shut out; in the struggles of conscience, in the silent dawning of higher ideals, and in the countless experiences of faithful lives, as well as in the warnings of shame and remorse, the pleading of the Divine Love is felt directly addressed to the individual's need, and following all the windings of his will. As it is on this side of our divine relations that all Religion lies, all Religion is supernatural, and there is a revealing presence of God in every soul that is not sunk in slavery to the mere natural man. But the closeness and intensity of this union between the human spirit and the Divine may vary in indefinite degrees; and the saints and prophets in whom its higher measures appear are the great instruments for clearing and opening the darkened windows of unawakened natures.

II.

To understand this doctrine of the Seat of Authority in Religion, we must remember that it has a negative as well as a positive side. *Truth cannot be revealed to incapacity.* If the human mind is naturally undivine, it could not grasp divine truth, or could have no apprehension of

its value and significance. Could we, in such a case, fall back on "external criteria," such as the working of miracles for ever beyond the possibility of Nature and Reason to explain? There seems really to be no conceivable connection between the possession of such power—even if it were historically proved—and the possession of divine truth. The two things have nothing in common. "External criteria," says Martineau, "i.e., *unmoral* rules for finding *moral* things, *physical* rules for finding *spiritual* things—there can be none."

If, then, we are to dispense with infallible persons and infallible books, nothing remains but to fall back on the Reason and Conscience of Man—and not merely of the individual man, but of Mankind. The question is, therefore: What did this mean for Martineau, and what can it mean for ourselves?

For Martineau, the fundamental thought with all its implications is wrapped in one pregnant saying:—

I can find no rest in any view of Revelation short of that which pervades the fourth Gospel . . . that it is an appearance, to beings who have something of the Divine Spirit within them, of a yet Diviner without them, leading them to the Divinest of all, which embraces them both.

In this statement two things are made clear. (i.) The seat of the authority is always at first external. Its first source is the higher mind of a fellow-creature, one who is, with us, a son of man, but "higher," because more of the

Divine is expressed through him. And inasmuch as we have not entirely effaced the Divine Image within us—inasmuch as we have something of the Divine Spirit—it is possible not only for us to appreciate him, but for him to stir up the Divine elements in us into stronger life. Thus instinctively we look up to him as our Master. (ii.) In doing this, he makes the seat of the authority become internal. He ceases to be our Master. What happens is that our moral life consents to his, and owns him with ourselves as servants of a higher righteousness “which opens its oracles and seeks its organs in us all.”

Both of these views are true; but as they are conflicting truths, they cannot be held on the same terms. They are expressions of two different stages of religious experience.

(i.) The first is a fact of universal experience. Men need help from stronger higher natures, and they need that help constantly renewed. There is a materialism which is not a matter of theory but of habit and practice, which the conditions of modern life do much to promote, and which so submerges the spiritual factors of our life, that we have come to take it as a matter of course for a man's common sense of right and wrong to be dulled by the drudgery or pressure or rush of the struggle for existence to-day. In such a state of things, where our higher nature slumbers save where its deeps are broken up by trouble, all appeals to

what is Divine within us must be insistent and constant if they are to waken it into life. And the mass of mankind have found this help in the Bible, and most of all in the appeal made by the life and love and sacrifice of Jesus, because it has held the mirror up to their consciences, has comforted them in sorrow, and deepened in them the feelings which spiritual truths express.

(ii.) The second stage is admittedly the higher, but it is an ideal, not a fact of human nature in general. It was the ideal of devout Israel: "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets." "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them." It was the ideal of St. Paul: that apostles, prophets, teachers are needed "till all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." It was the ideal of the seer of Patmos: "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the Temple of it; and the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it; for the glory of God did lighten it."

If we understand the reality of these two

stages of religious experience, and understand the difference between them, then we have in our hands the master-key to the problem of the seat of Authority in Religion.

III.

In Martineau, as in every religious thinker, we have carefully to distinguish religion as an experience and a conviction, and the account given of its logical framework.

What makes religion possible ? The answer to this question lies in a fundamental thought which Martineau held consistently all his life: *the Universal Incarnation*. In his ninetieth year he repeated it once more, in a plea for *the extension of the Incarnation idea from the person of Christ to the nature of man*. I select the following as typical of many different expressions which he gave to the thought:—

The Incarnation is true, not of Christ exclusively, but of man universally, and of God everlastingly. He bends into the human, to dwell there; and humanity is the susceptible organ of the Divine. And the spiritual light in us which forms our higher life is "of one substance" with His own Righteousness—its manifestation, with unaltered essence and authority, on the theatre of our nature. Of this grand and universal truth, Christ became the revealer, not by being an exceptional personage (who could be a rule for nothing), but by being a signal instance of it so intense and impressive as to set fire to every veil that would longer hide it.¹

In virtue of this *living union between God and man*, we maintain "the strictly divine

¹ *Life*, vol. i. pp. 396-7.

and inspired character of our own highest desires and best affections, which are part of the very being of God—his perpetual self-revelation to us.” That is why Religion is possible.

What is Religion, then ? Religion begins when our highest springs of action begin to be *experienced* as divine: when something Ideal, something which at first seems only a dream of future possibility, becomes more than this, and brings us into touch with a Real Presence, higher still, ready to strengthen us as we try to make the Ideal a part of ourself. What do we really mean by realizing an Ideal ? If the Ideal is genuine, it is a part of God. Those men who have laid down their lives for an Ideal have been able to do it because they have seen this. And when you realize an Ideal, it is still part of God, but now it is part of yourself as well. Whenever you have an Ideal living and moving in a human soul, a living thought in the soul of something better that is desired, there you have a possible and sometimes an actual experience of God. Such is Martineau’s view of what religion essentially is—the abiding nature of religion, giving life to all its various forms.

The religious experience, interpreted as we have found Martineau interpreting it, is, we affirm, actual evidence of the reality of God and of his relation to us, and is to be accepted as evidence, even if we do not distinctly

discern anything answering to it in our own personal lives. We have no right to say that we are absolutely without it. The most that we can say is, that we have it not yet in a form active or developed enough for us to have given such an account of it *from our own experience alone*: and we have no right to make our own private experiences into all-sufficient measures of truth. Nor have we any right to limit our own experience to *definite and clear* impressions. The best things within us are often—we may even say, with Martineau, always—beyond the range of the clear consciousness that seems to rule our daily life. And when some portion, some aspect, of those things comes within the radius of the search-light, unsuspected heights and depths of life are realized, and we say with Job, “I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee.” And yet, what is seen is but a fragment of the unfathomable Reality. Every attempt, says Martineau, to express the Eternal in shapes of finite thought must be provisional, “and *in its detail* suicidal,” for other fragments, obscurely working, at length assert their power, claiming recognition for themselves, claiming to be harmonized with what has been before attained:—

The Holy Spirit is perpetually passing through the silent spaces of the soul, and suffusing them with inexhaustible colouring of beauty; and however much of self-consciousness

may characterize modern thought, there is no more chance of it abolishing unconscious life, than there is of the growth of knowledge finishing up the Infinite on which it makes a semblance of encroachment.

There is no assertion here that any faculty or capacity of our nature is *exclusively* the organ of religion. Different minds often represent different types of experience, each of which has a right to be heard. In one of the most suggestive of his Essays, dealing with "Distinctive Types of Christianity," Martineau urges that there must be a correspondence between the mood of mind and the form of belief, and finds four chief temperaments of mind, to which different orders of experience specially appeal: "The quest of physical *order*, the sense of *right*, the instinct of *beauty*, and the consciousness of tempestuous *impulses* carrying the will off its feet." Were each of these tendencies *left to itself to form its own unaided creed*—and this is liable to happen in minds of great force or periods of special action or reaction—then "the doctrine of mere Science would be *atheistic*; of Conscience, *theistic*; of Art, *pantheistic*; of Passion, *sacrificial*." "Mere Science," that is, physical science if left to itself, is limited to "experience" in the narrowest sense of the word, in which it means nothing more than the facts that our bodily senses reveal to us; and from this point of view, the word "God" has no meaning. This is true; the attempt has however, been

made—and made by Martineau himself, among many others—to build up religious belief through a method of proof precisely similar to that of science. Science seeks for the “facts” of Nature, but also for “hypotheses,” suppositions, theories, which are to “explain” the facts she finds. In the same way the theologian may regard the universe with its harmony, law, and order, as a vast fact, and the existence of an Intelligent Creator as a hypothesis to explain that fact. This leads to what Martineau afterwards called “The Religion of Causation.” The idea of God which is thus reached, may be a very lofty one, but the attempt is made to reach it by a merely logical road. Even “The Religion of Conscience” may be treated in a like manner: our experience of the authority of Conscience may be regarded as a fact, and the existence of an All-righteous Ruler as a hypothesis to explain the fact. Here again we have the endeavour to find a merely logical road; God and Man are two separated beings, as are God and the World, and it is “across a chasm without a bridge” that we look to him.

IV.

In Martineau's own outlook on life and history, the Religion of Conscience looms so largely over the field of experience that he is utterly unable to see the truth contained in the

ancient dogmas of inherited evil and man's moral incapacity. He is therefore led to a religious individualism whose keynote is sounded thus: "*God's part is done*, when, having made us free, he shows to us our best; ours now remains to pass from illumination of conscience to surrender of will." This implies an inadequate view of moral evil and its remedies.

There is a special reason for this with men like Martineau. There are some who, by their very purity of heart and stainless integrity of character, tend to under-estimate the weakness of ordinary humanity and exaggerate the power of moral freedom. Hence they may fail to understand the full meaning of Sin: that it is more than any act or series of acts—that it comes to be a corruption of character which is not cured by ceasing to disobey. They miss seeing the hold which evil may have on human nature. The following passage from Martineau reveals the writer to us:

Whoever is faithful to a first grace that opens on him shall receive another in advance of it; and, if still he follows the messenger of God, angels ever brighter shall go before his way. Every duty done leaves the eye more clear and enables gentler whispers to reach the ear; every brave sacrifice incurred lightens the weight of the clinging self which holds us back; every storm of passion swept away leaves the air of the mind transparent for more distant visions, and thus by a happy concord of spiritual attractions, the helping graces of heaven descend and meet the soul intent to rise.

Is this steady progress towards moral perfection always possible for the individual man?

Is it true that however far a man has let himself go on the downward way he can at any time turn and begin a gradual process of ascent? This is an ideal theory which does not accord with the facts of life.

If the physical instincts of the body, or avarice or any of the passions which delight to feed alone in solitary selfishness, are indulged for long, there is a growing atrophy of those powers in the man which are distinctively human and potentially divine; conscience and reason are quenched, self-consciousness and self-command withered, all the finer qualities of our nature are destroyed one by one—there is the loss of all the higher self, which is the true loss of the soul. And without dwelling on such disasters of the soul as this, surely it is not true that the effects of indulging our lower desires—I mean the real effects on self and character—can be obliterated simply by effort and change of will. The effects may indeed pass out of range of our self-consciousness and be forgotten; but they work in secret still.

One great means by which evil tendencies come to be so deeply-rooted in man's nature is through effects of environment and social and physical inheritance. We know that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children and in them; we know that there are forms of companionship and association which draw out the bad and foster it, and repress the good

in those who are subject to them; we know that there are conditions of life which make it almost impossible that those who share in them can grow to be other than morally stunted, degraded beings, full of anti-social and criminal impulses.

Nevertheless, if the natural connection of the individual with the race explains the inheritance of evil, it also affords an inexhaustible fund of hope in providing for the inheritance of good. To say nothing of what Reason itself does, there are social feelings and impulses which from the beginning bind each one instinctively to the community. It remains true that of our own selves we do nothing; all that is best in each single life is vitally dependent on the general life of humanity, and ultimately on the Divine Life. This is the view of "man's relation to the community" which is likely to hold the future; and Martineau himself has given it eloquent expression:—

The process of social evolution so implicates together the individual agent and his fellows that we can scarce divide the causal factors into individual and social, inner and outer. *Bodily*, no doubt, each man stands there by himself, while his family are grouped separately around him; but *spiritually* he is not himself without them, and the major part of his individuality is relative to them, as theirs is relative to him. He has no self which is not reflected in them and of which they are not reflections; and this reveals itself by a kind of moral amputation, if death should snatch them away and put his *selfhood* to the test of loneliness. It is the same with the larger groups which enclose him in their sympathetic embrace. His country with its history and its institutions, and all that these imply, is not external to himself: its life-blood courses through his veins

inseparably mingled with his own. The social union is most inadequately represented as a compact or tacit bargain, subsisting among separate units, agreeing to combine for specific purposes and for limited times, and then disbanding again to their several isolations. It is no such forensic abstraction, devised as a cement for mechanically conceived components; but a concrete though spiritual form of life, penetrating and partly constituting all persons belonging to it. What we call a conflict between a private and a public interest and treat as a dissension between a man's inner self and an outward society, is not really a wrestling match between two independent organisms or personalities, unless it comes to physical rebellion and war. The inner man is himself the scene of the living strife; the public interest that pleads with him is his interest too; the society that withstands him is his society; it is no foreign and intrusive power that confronts and stops his calculating prudence, or the madness of his pleasure or his passion, but his own share of an altruistic reason and love that live and throb in other hearts and minds as well.

When the Religion of Conscience is isolated, it demands a special logical framework. How is this provided? It is built up on the fundamental ethical fact of Obligation, in which we discover laws over us not of our own making—commands not to be canvassed but obeyed:

If the sense of authority means anything at all, it means the discernment of something *higher than we*, having claims on our self, therefore no mere part of it; hovering over and transcending our personality, though also mingling with our consciousness and manifested in its intimations. If I rightly interpret this sentiment, I cannot therefore stop within my own limits, but am irresistibly carried on to the recognition of another than I. Nor does that other remain without further witness: the predicate "higher than I" takes me yet a step beyond; for what am I? A *Person*: higher than whom no "thing" assuredly—no mere phenomenon—can be; but only *another Person*, greater and higher, and of deeper insight.¹

¹ *Types of Ethical Theory* (2nd edition), vol. ii. p. 104. The italics are in the original.

It is claimed, then, that we may pass by a process of inference from man's conscience to God. On this point we must concentrate our attention. Let us take a case in which this inference is not made—and it is not usually made by men in their ordinary life—the consciousness of moral authority is there all the same. But does it—apart from the inference—contain any sort of direct apprehension or experience of the Divine? If it does not, then our moral consciousness is complete in itself, and there seems no ground for a logical passage to a divine cause outside it. Martineau asks “whether an insulated nature can be a seat of authority at all.” It is indeed hard to understand how a being who is conceived to exist as *in this argument* Martineau conceives man to exist, could ever be conscious of imperfection and an obligation to be better. For God and Man are conceived to be separate beings, just as we are separate from each other; and if God, the Infinite Person, is strictly *other than* man, the finite person, then the latter must be capable of existing as a self-sufficient being, even if there were no God. One might well ask, how could such a being be conscious of himself as imperfect, and, as it were, “rise above himself” as he does in comparing himself with others and passing judgment on himself. But the difficulty is not in the least solved by assuming that “another Person” is perfect. We have God and man confronting

each other as separate beings, divided in their existence; and man is really a seat of authority to himself, except when his reflective faculty wakes up sufficiently to make the inference to God; and the inference appears to be simply groundless.

Cardinal Newman has an interesting passage, which, as he uses it—to enforce the need of reliance on the Church of Rome—contains a subtle *petitio principii*, but which will serve to illustrate our point. He supposes the case of a man thinking himself out from Catholicism to Atheism:—

First, he would protest against the sacrifice of the Mass; next he gave up baptismal regeneration and the sacramental principle; then he asked himself whether dogmas were not a restraint on Christian liberty as well as sacraments; then came the question, What, after all, was the use of teachers of religion? Why should anyone stand between him and his Maker? After a time it struck him that this obvious question had to be answered by the Apostles as well as by the Anglican clergy; so he came to the conclusion that the true and only revelation of God to Man is that which is written in the heart. This did for a time, and he remained a Deist. But then it occurred to him that this inward moral law was there within the breast, whether there were a God or not, and that it was a roundabout way of enforcing that law to say that it came from God, and simply unnecessary, seeing that it carried with it its own sacred and sovereign authority, as our feelings instinctively testified; and when he turned to look at the physical world around him, he really did not see what scientific proof there was of the Being of God at all; and it seemed to him that all things would go on quite as well as at present, without that hypothesis as with it.¹

If the soul of man is separate in existence from God, and is yet capable of having a moral

¹ *Grammar of Assent*, ch. vii.

consciousness as its crown and completion, man would be capable of having the moral consciousness if there were nothing divine outside himself. Hence it would seem that if there can only be a *logical* passage from man to God—if the knowledge of God is nothing more than an hypothesis to account for facts of consciousness with which He is in no real or vital connection—then the logical passage and the hypothesis break down. The interpretation of our moral consciousness which is needed must proceed by another way; and this way is shown by Martineau himself.

V.

Ethical individualism, however, is very far from being Martineau's last word on the Seat of Authority in Religion. We reach his deepest view when we understand that what is called "the recognition of Conscience as the voice of God" is really the transformation of the sense of moral authority into Reverence. Martineau's profoundly suggestive account of this change is so striking that I do not resist the temptation to quote it in full.

The essence of the change is that in our consciousness of moral authority we are aware of the moral Ideal simply as something which ought to be but is not; we *reverence* it when we are aware of it as actually realized—and then it comes home to us with a personal claim

far superior in vividness and effect to any "categorical imperative" or any moral doctrine. The first stage of Reverence arises when we see a higher goodness realized in another human life:—

The posture of mind which I describe as Reverence cares for right actions not simply as good phenomena, but as functions of pure, of faithful, of self-devoted, of lofty *character*. Not content to rest with the fruits, it presses on to the lovely or stately nature that bore them. And in thus passing from them to their producing source, the feeling itself undergoes a change. In place of an approbation which looks with complacency down, it becomes a homage which looks reverently up, and finds itself in presence, not of a definite thing done, but of a living doer, the cause of it and of indefinite other possibilities of nobleness; and so it is transferred from the level of ethical satisfaction to the plane of personal affection and aspiration. Till this change takes place, there is hardly any *sacred* element in the ideas of right. The moralities of conduct occupy the human and civic platform; but even in our relations with each other, some other light—call it poetic or call it divine—dawns upon the heart, when the revelations of some pathetic experience, or the disclosures of some rare biography, have opened to us the interior of a tender and strenuous soul, and kindled the heights above us with a fresh glory.

I have spoken thus far of Reverence in its direction upon persons; distinguishing it from simple approbation in this—that in Approbation we look to the particular act, with praise of its inward spring as compared with its tempting rival; while Reverence looks through and past the act to the type of character which it expresses, as compared with the relative weakness of our own. In order to take this outward direction upon objective goodness, the sentiment must, however, have had a prior stage of experience. For that inward disposition and character in another, upon which it now fixes, is nothing that can be seen or heard or touched; its presence before us is learnt by suggestion, by outward signs, of language, look, and act, which, we are aware, have but one interpretation. We read him by the key of sympathy, and what we attribute to him is

known to us by its gleams and movements within ourselves. *There* it is that we have learnt the feeling that is due to it; that it has looked upon us from above; that it has spoken to us in tones that lift us towards it. . . The call at once carries our eye up; thence the authority descends; and instead of passing like coins of exchange, between men that make them and men that take them, it lies upon each, it lies upon all; it has the grasp of a moral unity, the range of a moral universality; it is the overflow of Infinite Perfection into the finite mind.

This, says Martineau, is the final revelation of Conscience, the issue of its full development; and he proceeds:—

Thus, within our own consciousness, we find the same difference which was observable in the appreciation of others, between simply moral approbation and the feeling of Reverence. The latter cannot express itself without resorting, in the notice of affection and character, to language more than ethical, and plainly crossing the boundary into the field of Religion. It lives in the presence of souls that are holy, of dispositions that are heavenly, of tempers that are saintly, of Love that is Divine.¹

It is therefore not enough to say that “over a free and living person nothing short of a free and living person can have authority.” What has authority must be more than the dictate of a free and living person; it must be a principle of life which is more than merely due to his personality, but is revealed by him because it is realized in his character. Through being his Real, it becomes revealed to us—if we fall short of it—as our Ideal.

This intervening position alone it is which renders the function of a Mediator—Uplifter, Inspirer—possible; and that not instead of immediate revelation, but simply as making us

¹ *Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. ii. p. 233 ff.

more aware of it and helping us to interpret it. For in the very constitution of the human soul there is provision for an immediate apprehension of God. But often in the transient lights and shades of conscience we pass on and 'know not *who* it is'; and not till we see in another the victory that shames our own defeat, and are caught up by an enthusiasm for some realized heroism or sanctity, the authority of right and the beauty of holiness come home to us as an appeal literally Divine.¹

Thus it is that other souls, going beyond our attainments, but not beyond our possibilities, first call Reverence into life. But they do so because the manifestation of realized goodness without awakens Reverence for the absolute, universal Goodness which is or may be revealed within. When this happens Reverence is passing into its highest stage, where—when reason has grown deep enough to interpret it—it becomes nothing less than an apprehension of the indwelling God. This highest stage is reached when, "independently of actual or visible heroes or saints on whom Reverence may fix when they are present, it finds for itself the means of exercise; it goes forth in faith upon invisible objects, and discerns, behind the veil of the actual, a better and a higher before which it humbles itself with cries of dependence and adoration."

When this happens our aspiration after goodness which ought to be, becomes the inspiration of Goodness which already is, in the deepest sense of the word; a Divine Life of Goodness, which is real all through our life

¹ *Seat of Authority*, p. 652.

of change, struggle, and growth; a Life on which our personal life is vitally dependent, and which is waiting with all the might of its Reality, to flow gently into the wavering will and uplift the drooping resolves to the heights of a nobler constancy.

In one of his finest passages Dr. Martineau has expressed the final meaning of the Symbolist view:—

Amid all the sickly talk about Ideals, which has become the commonplace of our age, it is well to remember that so long as they are dreams of future possibility, and not faiths in present reality, so long as they are a mere self-painting of the yearning spirit, and not its personal surrender to immediate communion with Infinite Perfection, they have no more solidity or steadiness than floating air-bubbles glittering in the sunshine and broken by the passing wind . . . the very gate of entrance to Religion, the moment of new birth, is the discovery that your gleaming Ideal is the everlasting Real—no transient brush of a fancied angel's wing, but the abiding presence and persuasion of the Soul of Souls.

VII
SYMBOLISM IN RELIGIOUS
EXPERIENCE

SUMMARY

I. Subject introduced by contrasting associations of the Cross as Roman instrument of punishment and its associations as Christian symbol. Illustrations of *sacramental value* created by association with deeply moving experiences.

II. These are cases of symbolism based on acquired association, where the associations dominate the object. Contribution to the emotional strength of the conservative factor in religion.

III. No necessary resemblance between such symbols and the object symbolised. Such associations not only matters of personal temperament. May be created by the accumulated experience of generations and centuries. Domination of the material by the spiritual.

IV. Symbolism based on Real Presence of the object symbolised: (a) in Nature. Illustrations from Coleridge and Wordsworth. Distinction between the direct experience and its interpretation. Standards of valuation.

V. Symbolism based on Real Presence of the object symbolised: (b) in Humanity. Interpretation in terms of human Ideals. Special use of the term Symbolism. Standards of valuation. Degrees of insight in apprehension of the Real Presence.

VI. Need of such symbols. What *is* everywhere and always must be *found* somewhere and somewhen. Symbolism valid without claim to finality and completeness in revelation of object symbolised. Counter assertion of ecclesiastical theology criticised. Illustrations from doctrine (a) of the Eucharist, (b) of the authority of Scripture, (c) of the Person of Christ.

VII. When alleged miraculously effective ritual is rejected, can institutional religion provide a ceremonial capable of stimulating apprehension of the Real Presence? Affirmative answer. Application to Protestant ritual; illustrations: the marriage service, the funeral service. Individual worshipper to be made to feel that in worship *something is really being done* beyond any subjective change in his own mind. Worship fully objective and sincere is possible for the modern mind. Fundamental human impulse to be stimulated and directed by the Church.

SYMBOLISM IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

I

THE history of Religion contains nothing more significant than the transformation which Christianity wrought in all the associations of one of the most painful and degrading modes of execution under ancient Roman criminal law. The Cross, where no vital injury was inflicted on the sufferer, meant hours, sometimes days, of lingering death from pain and starvation combined. It stood for a death as shameful as it was agonizing; until the day when, through the death of one Victim upon it, it became a spiritual symbol of unique power to move the souls of men.

In order to help our imagination to realize the change, we may try to think of it as occurring in our memory and feeling for some hideous machine of lingering death contrived in the dark ages, or even some instrument of more speedy execution like the headsman's axe. If we can imagine any train of circumstances which should make of such an object

a symbol of joy and spiritual dominion, so that builders would crown with its golden effigy their greatest and loftiest constructions, and art delight to weave its form into every kind of decoration, and dying eyes gaze upon it for the comfort and peace it could minister to the soul: if we can imagine that grim and bloody weapon purged of all the associations which, if we realize them, make us shudder as we look upon it, and filled with other associations which speak of spiritual victory and joy without end: then perhaps we may come to some adequate conception of the change which has been wrought in the symbolism of the Cross.

Whenever the associations of a symbol are linked on to the great and deep and moving realities of life, it becomes a *sacred* thing and has a *sacramental value*. In speaking thus of sacramental value, we refer to a range of fact and experience wider far than the limited and technical ecclesiastical usage of the term suggests; and until we understand this wider range of experience, we shall never understand the religious appeal which the purely ecclesiastical Sacrament can make. Jesus Christ instituted no Sacrament in the ecclesiastical sense. But in repeating the act which they had witnessed in the upper room, the disciples did what was natural, human, almost inevitable. It reminded them of words which had pierced their hearts, of a love which swept like

a cleansing stream through their souls, of a sacrifice which they, perhaps, only then began to understand.

It is written that Abram the Hebrew "went up out of Egypt . . . unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first: and there he called on the name of the Lord." He came up out of Egypt dishonoured, demoralized; and almost instinctively he made his way back to an old altar where he had met and communed with his God. It would remind him of the fellowship which he once knew, and revive the old vision which kept him clean and strong.

Not only the profound and unutterable mysteries of experience, parenthood, love, death, have thus a sacramental value. We know that even commonplace things may come to be invested with a moving power which marks them out, for us, from all the world beside. Mr. Harold Begbie tells of a Salvationist who fell into sudden temptation, where his resistance was broken down. In his shame he rushed home and struggled into his old red jersey. Why? The old red jersey stood for clean and uplifting emotions, peace of conscience, the joy of service. It was to that Salvationist what the old altar was to Abram. To repudiate sacramental things like these is to repudiate life.

There is something repellent in the attempt to *analyse* experiences such as those which we

have described; but there can be no full appreciation without some analysis. The friend who is understood is loved the better. Indeed true love gives insight always; and the power it gives of divining what to others is invincible, is a species of analysis.

II

When we analyse the change which has transformed the meaning of the Cross, we find in it the clue to a type of symbolism which enters into many of our most ordinary experiences, and which is of far-reaching importance for the understanding of Religion itself. The symbol is like a soul in a body. The body is the instrument and expression of the soul, although it does not resemble it. We have a familiar example in *language*. Written and spoken language have been called the "two incarnations of thought." The characters formed by the pen, and the sounds uttered in speech, have no positive resemblance to the thought which they seek to express. But these letters and sounds become *signs* to those who have the key to them. They seek to express the intangible thought, and make it present and living in the minds of those who read or hear. Language illustrates such symbolism not only in the details of its structure. A whole utterance, written or spoken, may by acquired association become itself a symbol

suffused with emotional power—as in a battle-cry, or a National Anthem, or a poem like “Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled,” or a Covenant.

The symbol whose power springs from acquired association illustrates the justification of the conservative element in Religion. As we trace the sources of its strength, we see more and more of the bonds that bind and consecrate change as a dependent growth, and even consecrate it with kinship. The old altar is a trysting-place where we found quietness and confidence and grace; and we go back to it again and again. In this spirit, Emerson spoke of the visible church:

We love the venerable house
Our fathers built to God;
In heaven are kept their grateful vows,
Their dust endears the sod.

Here holy thoughts a light have shed
From many a radiant face,
And prayers of tender hope have spread
A perfume through the place.

And anxious hearts have pondered here
The mystery of life,
And prayed the Eternal Light to clear
Their doubts, and aid their strife.

For faith, and peace, and mighty love,
That from the Godhead flow,
Showed them the life of heaven above
Springs from the life below.

The visible Church becomes a religious symbol when it is itself permeated, in the mind of the

worshipper, with the faith and feeling which *is* his religion. For this reason it has been said that nearly all the religious symbolism which becomes really powerful in an individual's experience comes into his life in childhood. This is true wherever symbolic value is due to acquired association. It is seldom after those formative years that the close association between object and emotion can be wrought which is essential to religious symbolism. It requires moreover, as a rule, the whole force of the child's social surroundings—the suggestive influence of parents, teachers, older playmates, and of the people in general in whose actions he is interested—to suffuse the material object or the spoken word or the external act with the religious feeling that shall make it truly and deeply symbolic. This explains why *it is impossible for the community to make for itself a new religious symbol except by long years of gradual habituation or through the force of some emotional crisis.*

Sometimes a deliberately organized and concentrated effort of human co-operation does seem actually to have the power to create a new religious symbol in the sense of investing an object, let us say a building, with a power which otherwise could only be created by the acquired associations of centuries. While these words are being written,¹ there is taking place in a northern city just such a concentrated act

¹ Consecration of Liverpool Cathedral, July, 1924.

of the group-spirit, in which a building—itsself the offspring of one man's genius, following with some significant modifications the pattern of the mediaeval cathedrals, a building new and in fact unfinished—is being invested with an influence and a meaning which might seem to require long years of gradual habituation to create. I leave on one side the question of whether the ecclesiastical dignitaries who believe themselves to be consecrating that building really believe that a supernatural change is being wrought within it. Certain it is that the vast multitude who have gathered there are being made to feel that these walls are, as it were, being filled with the manifold influences and associations of the Christian tradition of two thousand years, and that the real power of the ceremony lay in the fact that this change was achieved in a day. Whatever the ecclesiastics may or may not believe, this is the real consecration.

III

We have seen that symbolism *in the meaning of it which is now under discussion* involves no necessary resemblance between the symbol and the thing symbolized. For this very reason it illustrates the primacy of Spirit. Its symbolic power is acquired and in fact created by actual experience, and dominates the object itself as science would study it. Some deep-

seated instinct, some dominant interest, some passionate personal desire, some moving experience of the inner life, has gripped this thing: it may be one thing for you, another thing for me; but whatever it is, it becomes a symbol, with a meaning and power of its own. Symbolism, far more than science, illustrates the victory and dominion of spirit. Science reveals nature as such; symbolism makes natural objects into glorified images of the inner life.

No difficulty need be made over the fact, that in so far as symbolic value is based on acquired association, it may vary with personal temperament and personal experience. As "the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger may not intermeddle with its joy," so in every single life, in every family, in every one of the multitude of groups into which social experience divides men, there proceeds a continual creation of symbolic values shared by none, or few, beside. These individual and group variations, which include variations in religious feeling, are an inevitable result of the conditions of our experience and of the individual and social differences among human beings.

Nevertheless there are symbols whose value is the product of experience over a larger range than any of those which we have just indicated. Their symbolic power is acquired gradually through the accumulated experiences of many

generations. It is acquired because in these experiences there are broad, far-reaching similarities or uniformities; and the creative reactions of the human spirit upon them are found to work along broadly similar lines. Along such lines Art, Morality, and Religion make of Nature a constant symbol of the inner life of man's spirit and its normal development. Natural things are found to be capable of a constant transfiguration and transformation by spiritual activities to express spiritual purposes. How is this possible? It is possible if there is not merely an inner correspondence but a fundamental unity of the laws of Nature and the laws of mental life. Art, Morality, and Religion are revelations of what is hidden at once in Nature and in Spirit—revelations of the Absolute Energy which is manifested alike in the unfolding of the natural and of the spiritual universe.

We must make an assumption which may be expressed as Herbert Spencer expressed it in a striking passage at the close of what is otherwise one of the weakest of his books:¹ "Among mysteries which become more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty that we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed." We are not here concerned with the technicalities of Spencer's theoretic agnosti-

¹ Spencer, *Ecclesiastical Institutions*.

cism. The reaction of the human spirit on the experience which he has described, is the basis of Religion. Religion is always concerned with our relation to great world-forces. It brings human life into contact with something tremendous that transcends or envelops human life; it is a striving towards some sort of harmony of man with his whole unseen environment; and in the end it aspires to that great prize, the being at peace with God. Its historic forms depend on the evolution of man's mental and spiritual faculties and on prophetic personalities. It follows that no religious symbol is wholly illusory: if it conceals, it also reveals. And a great part of the history of Religion depends on the struggle to replace inferior or unworthy symbols by higher and better ones.

IV

There is another kind of symbolism, created by an experience which is indeed vitally related to the experience which creates symbols by the power of association; but it is not the same; and if we are unable or unwilling to understand it, then the meaning, not of Religion only, but of all the deeper moving influences in human life, is seven times sealed to us.

Can we describe it, in a few words? It is the experience of one who is haunted by the presence of an invisible and abiding world

behind the visible and transient world, and sustaining both this and himself. But it is more. It is the presence of an unseen and eternal Life within the visible and temporal world—a Life which he may inwardly share, and with which, for moments, he may become one. It implies appreciation, even love, of the visible and temporal, but passing as it were in a perennial stream into love of the invisible and eternal. If this continuity is broken, then we have two dead things that fall apart. Let it remain unbroken, and we have *the symbol whose power springs from the Real Presence of the object symbolized*. “Jacob lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of that place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. . . . And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. . . . This is none other but the house of God, and this the gate of heaven.”

The symbolism of the Real Presence is the inspiration of the higher literature in every age of which human records survive. We might appeal to Plato: not to the Plato of the *Parmenides* or the *Theaetetus*,—Plato the dialectician, the mathematical genius; but to

the Plato of the *Phaedrus*, the *Symposium*, the *Timaeus*,—Plato the man of vision and faith.¹ It will serve our present purpose better to appeal to two great English poets. Compare these utterances of Coleridge. The first is from *Dejection*:—

All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green;
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye !
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen;
Yon crescent moon as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless, lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are !

This is a vision of colour and form, but they are not symbols. They are seen as by one who gazes upon the outside of things. Yet he sometimes saw with a deeper sense, as this passage from *The Æolian Harp* can testify:—

O the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere—
Methinks it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled.

* * * * *

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each and God of all ?

¹ See J. A. Stewart, *Plato's Doctrine of Ideas*, part ii.: "The Doctrine of Ideas as expressing Aesthetic Experience."

Or this, from lines addressed to Charles Lamb:

Slowly sink

Behind the western ridge, thou glorious sun
Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers ! Richlier burn, ye clouds
Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves
And kindle, thou blue ocean ! So my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily, and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when he makes
Spirits perceive his Presence.

The Real Presence, thus intermittently revealed to Coleridge in the loveliness of external Nature, was to Wordsworth an object of habitual realization: sometimes indeed in "gleams like the flashing of a shield," but for the most part apprehended quietly in the actual scenes and occurrences, often quite ordinary scenes and occurrences, of external Nature and of human life, directly observed, accurately remembered, and plainly described; and of this experience *The Prelude* is the classic authoritative statement. The message pervades the whole poetry of Wordsworth, and as a concentrated statement of it we may recall once more the familiar lines (from *The Wye above Tintern*):—

I have felt

A Presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,

And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

The variety of ways in which this faith is expressed is sufficient to prove—what should have been evident beforehand—that finding or experiencing God in Nature is not a purely immediate feeling or intuition of the Reality (and, so far, infallible); every statement of it involves intellectual interpretation and even comment (and is, so far, fallible). The greatest poets are those to whom, as to Wordsworth, this revelation of God in Nature becomes an habitual faith which dominates their lives; so that in the end they see all things *sub specie aeternitatis* as symbols of the Real Presence.

This statement suggests an equally far-reaching question. How far can we avoid subjectivity in these personal experiences? What of the Real Presence found or experienced, by many, in the elements of the Sacrament? If they experience it there, can we consistently deny it? We cannot deny the reality of any direct and personal experience or feeling; but the trustworthiness of the interpretation put upon it is an entirely different question. The heathen is conscious of the Real Presence of a deity of some sort in his idol. He does *not* “bow down to wood and stone” *as such*. And there does not seem to be any essential difference of principle between

belief in the Real Presence in wood and stone and belief in it in bread and wine. Is there any standard of objectivity and sanity in this field? The only general answer which we can give is this. The test of the value of a religious symbol is that it *works*: in other words, that *life* as we know it, or as in our best moments we should wish it to be, can be built upon it.

V

We have now to face the question of what this doctrine of religious symbolism—the symbolism of the Real Presence—means in reference to humanity.

It means first of all that this world never did anywhere or at any time, contain more of essential divinity, or of eternal value, than is embodied in what is seen every day. There, is life, and there, a step away, is death. There, is the only kind of beauty there ever was. There, is the old human struggle and its fruits together. There, is the text and the sermon, the real and the ideal, in one. Of the fibre of which these things consist is the material woven of all the finest meanings that ever were, or ever shall be, in this world. “While the earth remaineth,” it is written, “summer and winter, heat and cold, seed-time and harvest, life and death, shall not cease.” And while Humanity remaineth, in this world or in any

other, there will be the elemental endeavours and elemental trusts which are the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen—the material of Eternal Religion, the content of the Everlasting Gospel.

It is possible to state this very simply. We are continually condemning humanity in its present condition; and when we examine the matter we find that our condemnation is made by reference to a standard, a vision, of what humanity ought to be. And that standard, we find, is one that humanity itself has furnished to us. It is shown to us in the life and spirit of men and women who have made pure and strong the waters of life. It is the sense of what the world would be if it were controlled by the spirit of such men as Jesus and Saint Francis, Socrates and Buddha.

Our best hope for the world is that *the inner springs of personal life* may be made more fresh and pure and deep. What force working to this end can be more natural and spiritual than transmitted influence from soul to soul? And when your inner life, whence flow your daily thoughts and actions, is purified and strengthened by the influence of other lives more luminous than your own, and when so you are made conscious of a larger life encompassing yours and theirs alike; when something which was at first only a dream of future possibility becomes more than this, and reveals a Real Presence, higher still, ready to strengthen

you as you try to make that Ideal a part of yourself, then the age-long prayer is answered—we have seen the Father. If in any human soul a living ideal is present, a moving thought in that soul of some good to be realized in life, then the beginning of the vision that we ask for is already there. And out of the heart of human goodness the Divine voice is ever speaking—"Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me?"

No one is entirely without this consciousness of God; but, like all our consciousness, it is an *experience interpreted*. It may be expressed in a more true or a more mistaken form, and may also itself vary in extent, depth, or worth. It is possible to be a fellow-worker with the Divine Labour and Life, and to feel it and know it also; it is possible to feel as well as know that the Eternal is our resting-place and underneath us are the everlasting arms—that the Power Divine is quickening the spirit and inspiring strength within. The moments when such experiences are vividly felt and clearly interpreted are indeed rare; one aspect or the other, the strength of the experience or the interpretation of it, only too often fails. But only wilful blindness can deny its reality for some and its possibility for all; and this, when it really happens, is the highest moment in worship, the most precious moment in our whole life.

This view of the foundation of Religion may

fittingly be described as Symbolism. In this special sense the name is offered as the proper designation for a fundamental doctrine of what the basis of religious belief really is and must be. There is no part of human *experience*, in the widest sense of the word, which may not come to be both felt and known as a direct manifestation of the Divine Life and therefore as a *Symbol of God*. I say "felt and known," because these two sides of the experience are inseparable. God is manifested thus, not merely as a matter of inference or speculative thought, but of *feeling*, this being the least unsatisfactory term which our language provides. Any experience may become a religious experience. Not that all experiences are of equal value for this purpose: the presence of God may be discerned, in the manifold experiences of life, in different degrees and with diverse values. The final test of the value of a religious symbol must therefore be, as we have already suggested, that it *works*: in other words, that *life* as we know it, or as in our best moments we should wish it to be, can be built upon it. And for this reason we have interpreted Symbolism in terms of the Ideals which humanity forms, in advance of all its past experience and attainment.

Nothing follows from the mere fact that this or that man, or most men, do not recognize in their Ideals anything which they are inclined to call the presence and self-revelation of the

Divine. It is fatal blindness to deny that in such Ideals there is an experience which can only so be described. There is a conscious self-surrender in man's earnest scientific work—in his sincerest and profoundest philosophic thinking, in his devotion to that which has real and abiding beauty—above all, in his yielding to the promptings of humanity and love. Herein he is not merely realizing himself in the light of an *idea* of what is highest and best; he is also consciously surrendering himself to what is the Everlasting Real. The human race is constantly beset by such experience; aroused, it may be, by thinking over the achievements of intellectual, moral, and spiritual genius, or by the personal appeals of such, or by the mysterious yet very real influences of the beautiful and sublime in Nature or in human life. Hence the Symbolist need not be, and ought not to be, an individualist "in religion. He can tell us what he has experienced, and how he has tried to interpret his experience, of the everlasting realities of God; and his witness may be valid for other men, because the sources of his experience lie in the universal characteristics of humanity, whose deeper meaning all men are *capable* of feeling and knowing as he feels and knows them.

We do not know the being of God in the sense in which, for example, we know that the earth and planets move round the sun. Why

not? Because this and similar results are based on definitely measurable facts constantly and universally recurring in the experience of our senses. Indeed we may go so far as to admit that the experience of God cannot be described in terms which can be clearly stated to all rational beings and definitely verified by all properly equipped observers. This is because belief in God is always based on the higher possibilities of human nature as revealed in moral and spiritual experience. On the other hand if these experiences cannot be formulated with mathematical precision, and if they necessarily lack scientific definiteness, none the less all the historic records and expressions of man's inner life and experience do show a real convergence of evidence, lacking precision in detail, yet on the whole uniformly pointing in one direction, and that is towards the spiritual interpretation of the Infinite Power on which all the worlds depend.

VI

The need of such symbols is evident. We are familiar to-day with the doctrine of Divine Immanence. If it implies only a gospel of the Real Presence of God "in general" then it is not enough. Mere universalism leads us only to generalities and abstractions.

A recent writer, in putting forward a crude criticism of a well-known philosophical theory regarding the nature of Time, asked: "Where is the *specimen* on which this allegation is founded?" The question has a certain suggestiveness for our present purpose. If human literature is inspired, there must be some literature representative and typical of this inspiration in those moral and spiritual things which are necessary for our salvation. If all days are ever to become holy and all places sacred, there must be some definite day and hour, some place accessible to all, for such regulated and orderly meditation on divine things as may make them become a growing force in actual life. If the ideal of "natural supernaturalism" is ever to be realized among men, there must be some material things capable of sacramental value, capable, though natural, of suggesting the supernatural: though material, of suggesting the spiritual. The question thus raised relates to institutional religion as organized and localized: in a word to the Church or the Churches. How can institutional religion help us to realize God symbolically?

The human need of realizing the "particular" presence of God does not require any metaphysical quality of uniqueness or finality in the realization. Indeed this follows from the nature of a religious symbol. If we may adopt the definition of Sacrament given in the

Anglican Catechism, it is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." It reveals the spiritual fact *directly* but *partially*, and not with absolute finality and completeness. Such finality and completeness are no more necessary to the vitality of religion than they are to the vitality of art. Art is a conscious and concentrated endeavour to embody the spiritual in the material. Hence the appropriateness of the word ποιήσις, poesy, creation. The works of great artists are really alive. They have a soul, which the material form at once *conceals and reveals*. From architecture to music, there is not an art which is not symbolic. The artist gives to the material thing a power born in his own soul, to appeal to the inner life and feeling of those who contemplate it. It produces in us the feeling, the faith, the enthusiasm which the poet himself experienced in creating it. And if this is true of art, it is yet more true of Morality and Religion. These central activities of the human spirit can only express themselves by means of symbols—by seeking some outward and visible form and dominating it to express their own meanings and purposes, really and directly but never exhaustively.

Nevertheless it is just this quality of finality and completeness which the Church has insisted upon as vital. What this means may be seen clearly (i) in the claim of the Roman Catholic Church for her ritual; (ii) in the claim

of the Protestant Church for her Bible; (iii) in the assertion, made by both Churches, of the absolute Deity of Christ.

(i) The influence of Roman Catholic ritual does not consist merely in its sensuous appeal. In this ritual everything *means* something; and the greatest part of the ritual not only means something, but it is believed to be able to *do* something. It is a real cause of supernatural spiritual effects. The stupendous miracle of transubstantiation, in which the God-Man is declared to be present, truly, really, and substantially, under the form of visible and tangible things, is no mean claim; for, if it were true at all, it would be beyond comparison the most important fact in all the world. With all its impossibilities, its meaning can be defined and has been defined with a definiteness which we seek in vain in the shifting statements of Lutheran Catechisms or of Anglican Articles.

(ii) The other great historic type of authority in religion affirms the supremacy of a Book containing the literature of a race and of a movement which are spiritually unique. Nevertheless, in attempting to make "the Bible and the Bible only" into a supreme Court of Appeal, historic Protestantism has attempted the impossible. "The Bible and the Bible only" is not and never was the religion of orthodox Protestantism. The use of the Bible has been guided by the creeds of the ancient

Church, and the priesthood of the individual believer has never been taken seriously.

(iii) The decisive illustration of what the claim means may be found in the declaration of the Creed of Chalcedon:—

Our Lord Jesus Christ, at once perfect and complete in Godhead and perfect and complete in manhood, truly God, and truly man of a rational soul and body; one in essence with the Father as regards his Godhead . . . and at the same time one in Essence with us as regards his manhood . . . Proclaimed in two natures without confusion, without division or separation; the difference of the two natures being in no way destroyed on account of the union, but rather the specific characteristics of each nature being preserved in one Person.

The Eternal and Infinite God was completely and exhaustively embodied at one particular period in history. This theory of the nature of Jesus Christ goes beyond Symbolism. It is the final statement given by the Church of the dogma familiarly expressed in the proposition that "Jesus is God." The difficulties involved are sufficiently shown in the controversies of the century following the Council of Chalcedon: and in the subsequent revival of the *Kenosis* doctrine, that the Deity divested Himself of certain divine attributes in becoming incarnate.

When we come to see what the Deity of Christ means practically for multitudes of devout Christians, we find that this belief is not assimilated as a theological or philosophical proposition, but in Ritschlian fashion as a "judgement of value" expressing the way in

which the central Figure of the gospels appeals to many hearts. They hold on to the traditional doctrine of the Deity of Christ because this grasp enables them to visualize God better; and they feel that in some way they must visualize God. Others are prepared to say frankly that they only know God through Christ: apart from Christ, God is to them only an unknown, an x .

In contrast to all this covert agnosticism, let us hear Martineau:—

The whole world is held together by forces of natural reverence, grouping men in ten thousand clusters round centres diviner and more luminous than themselves. And if every family, every tribe, every sect may have its head and representative, excelling in the essential attributes that constitute the group, what hinders this law from spreading to a larger compass, and giving to *mankind* their highest realization, superlative in whatever is imitable and binding?

And again:—

The Incarnation is true, not of Christ exclusively, but of man universally, and of God everlastingly. He bends into the human, to dwell there: and humanity is the susceptible organ of the Divine. And the spiritual light in us, which forms our higher life is *of one substance* with his own Righteousness—its manifestation, with unaltered essence and authority, on the theatre of our nature. Of this grand and universal truth Christ became the revealer, not by being an exceptional personage (who could be a rule for nothing), but by being a signal instance of it, so intense and impressive as to set fire to every veil that would longer hide it.

Thus may those who deny that “Jesus is God” find in Jesus the supreme symbol of God.

VII

If we reject the claim of the Church that God is present or reveals himself with absolute completeness or finality in a special form of Ritual, or in a Book, or in a historic Personality, it remains true that the religious need which the Church endeavoured to provide for in these ways, must be satisfied. If we deny that any religious institution has divinely conferred authority to hold a ritual of miraculous efficacy, the question remains—How can the Church, by means of its own distinctive symbolism, help us to realize the presence of God ?

The Church, as an organization through which the past achievements of humanity in the spiritual life, and the discoveries made by religious genius, and the prophets' revelations of Reality, are interpreted and carried forward, is essential to the vitality of Religion. All the great spiritual pioneers and discoverers have felt that religion demands expression through established tradition and custom. The watchwords of the Church should be, *Continuity of life and spirit, with freedom to grow ; leadership through a body of ministers or its equivalent ; unity of belief in essential principles ; and loyalty to the organization and its ideals.*

We cannot, however, accept the traditional Protestant substitute for the Roman Catholic Priesthood and Mass, by falling back on a confidently literal understanding of Christ's

saying, "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them," and holding that what is called "the living Christ"—one with the historic Jesus who was then God's Incarnation on the earth—is present in the souls of the believers. When this claim is taken seriously, it is found to mean that a special form of ritual—in this case an assemblage of evangelical Christians for prayer and praise—brings about a supernatural result,—a real presence of Christ which does not occur under any other conditions.

Throughout this book we have been concerned to illustrate and defend a great extension—a recognized and deliberate extension—of the doctrine of the Real Presence of God as a self-revealing Life and Spirit, whom no historic life can ever fully express, but who may be shown forth by symbols in nature, in the great souls of history, in the Bible, and above all in the Master, Jesus. All vital religious symbols are therefore essentially spiritual forces making their appeal to our spiritual nature, as is set forth once for all in the Great Charter of Religion: "God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth." This defines the central duty of the Church, whose appeal must be above all to an inner sense.

But the Church is so only in name, and not in reality, unless *the best possibilities of the*

group-life and the group-spirit are called to help the central spiritual purpose. Group-life is never formless life; and above all, as called to the service of the aim of the Church, it demands an organized method of procedure—in one word *a ritual*. The very absence of ritual of a certain kind may itself be ceremonial and even effectively symbolic. The absence of pictures and statuary from most Protestant Churches is symbolic of the conviction that God is Spirit. The religious service of the Society of Friends, with its occasional long silences, is a most dramatic and eloquent ceremonial. In fact the Churches which began their history with a lively protest against contemporary ritual, have always tended to adopt definite forms of worship. The members of the group think it strange when the regular order of service is not followed; they expect the singing of hymns, the prayer, the anthem by the choir, the announcements, the sermon, and whatever else there may be, to follow the customary order. The meaning of the word “ritual” therefore must not be limited to religious ceremonial of what is called “the Catholic type.”

The Protestants of the past were helped by their worship, to live nearer to God; it expressed their highest ideals and enabled them to move multitudes. The question is whether the ordinary way of worship in evangelical Free Churches, in the English-

speaking world, answers to the real religious needs of men to-day. Yet, however this question may be answered, the *freedom* has a consequence of inestimable importance: it makes experiment possible; and at the present day experiment is needed. The Free Church minister to-day, just to the extent of his freedom, is able *if he can carry his people with him* to draw upon a large variety of different methods. He has indeed at his disposal all the ritual, ceremonial, and music of the world, if he chooses to use it; and, if he had sufficient judgement in this very important matter, would be able to produce the finest type of service in Christendom. If the way to this ideal is discovered in the future, it will be because experiment has been made the master-key.

Even in its present condition, the worship of a really Free Church can achieve what is impossible in forms of a more rigid type. Its leader is not obliged to behave as if his congregation belonged to the Holy Roman Empire, or to Elizabethan England, or to nowhere in particular. He can prevent the divorce of religion from life. He can present religion fresh and true to the generation around him. He can emphasize, in prayer and otherwise, the religious meaning of the urgent movements of his time. When it is desirable he can centre the worship of a whole Sunday round a particular aspect of Christian truth.

The importance of the sermon consists in the opportunity it offers for this living presentation of the religious issues of contemporary life; and the congregation to whom the appeal is made, though they limit the preacher's range of experiment, do by their real democracy give his words a representative and corporate power. Ideally, both the sermon and the congregation ought to be living symbols—the sermon as showing forth *the moral omnipresence of God*, and the congregation as a concentration of the Spirit.

Our purpose, however, is not to discuss in any detail the structure of an ideal form of Protestant religious service. Our purpose is more limited, but perhaps even more fundamental: to define, if possible, the main conditions which must be satisfied if any ritual or ceremonial in a really Free Church is to be effectively symbolic.

We shall find the clue to a solution of the problem, when we consider the significance of the Marriage Service from the Protestant point of view. The "Solemnization of Matrimony," so understood, is not the miraculous creation of a bond between two persons, through an Institution endowed by the Almighty with supernatural power. Neither is it merely a dramatic performance illustrating in fantastic fashion some general principle of monogamy or some actual event which took place elsewhere. The persons who assume the role of

bride and bridegroom in the marriage ceremony are actually thereby becoming wife and husband. Participation in the ceremonial is a personal commitment or pledge, and therefore is an act in the moral and social history of the participants. And among the others present, there will be some, connected by kinship, friendship, or personal interest in the participants, who are present not merely as onlookers. They are not passive; their presence implies an actual recognition of, and even consent to, what is being done.

The religious symbol must therefore possess something more than a certain depth of emotional meaning, whether based on acquired association or on an appeal to the sense of beauty. It must be regarded by the worshippers as a token of *a real event actually taking place here and now* in relation to the persons who share in the ritual, and who by sharing in it, co-operate in bringing about the result. At the Roman Catholic Mass, the worshipper believes, and therefore feels, that something is really being done beyond the mental impression made on himself. The worshipper in the Protestant Church must be made likewise to feel that something is really being done, and also (what the Roman Catholic cannot feel) that *he himself has a personal share in doing it*. The want of this condition accounts for the prevalent experience to-day: worship has become a passive

affair; the people no longer pray, but listen to the minister as he prays; the congregation has become an audience, a body of listeners, waiting for a mental impression to be made on themselves. Those who feel in this way towards the Church sooner or later cease to go to Church at all. Protestantism, in its dread of idolatry, has concentrated its appeal to one of our senses only—the sense of hearing; and has fallen back on a static and sedentary form of service which has a fatal tendency to create the merely passive attitude. We fully admit that no single method is possible to the exclusion of all others. The variations in human temperament and taste are so great, that diversity of ritual among Christian Churches—even among those who *believe* alike—will remain desirable and necessary. But God is known to men as Activity: and man's natural response to God is in the action of good works and in the action of worship, which involves the whole man and not merely one of his senses.

The principle force for counteracting the tendency to passivity in the Protestant service is Prayer. The worshipper may be made to feel, as he does not to-day, that in prayer something really happens. Not that trust in specific answers to special petitions should be taught from the pulpit; but that genuine prayer, even petitionary prayer, is the most trustworthy means of putting ourselves in

touch with the Unseen. There is such a thing as the atmosphere of prayer, which awakens our sense of the Real Presence of the Divine. We find a clue to understanding the kind of experience which arouses this feeling in the one kind of religious service, which almost everybody attends occasionally, no matter how sceptical he be, and which seldom fails to produce upon all present a deep effect. It has been said that for an increasing number of people, the only form of religious service is an occasional funeral; and with very rare exceptions, a funeral is always a religious ceremony. Many functions formerly discharged by the Church are now taken over by the State, but the disposal of the dead almost everywhere still remains in the hands of religion, and it is evident that the religious value of this service is very considerable. At the lowest estimate, it belongs to that borderland where feelings based on ordinary human relationship pass into religious feelings; and the greater number of those who take part in it, even by their mere presence, are not merely onlookers or spectators. We feel that we are really doing something, and also that something real is being done upon us. We testify to certain thoughts and feelings about the deceased; but also, even if in spite of ourselves, we are brought face to face with vast and silent forces that lie beyond our control,—the Infinite and Eternal Power from Whom all

things proceed, our conscious relation to Whom lies at the basis of religion. We are brought to the very edge of the Mystery, and we return to our ordinary lives at least with a renewed sense of its reality.

Now whether Death is regarded as a deliverance and release, or as a culminating human tragedy, it ought not to be left for this experience alone to startle us out of our ordinary matter-of-fact practical attitude and reveal to us the reality of the Eternal. It is this intimation of a Power which goes beyond all that science can discover, this realization of our own dependence on that Power, this questioning of the why, the whence, and the whither—it is this that the Funeral Service brings, and to this it owes its uniquely religious value. But we ought to be able to arouse this feeling through many experiences beside that of Death; and this reveals to us the possibility of a kind of worship which is as truly possible for the thoughtful man of to-day as it was in the ancient world. It is that instinctive sense of the Real Presence, and our reaction upon it, which has created all the religious symbols of history. Worship will not be outgrown. Its forms will change with changing symbols; but the thing itself is as lasting as is man's need. The task of the Church is to find the ways by which this fundamental human need may be stimulated and directed, and to discover and use the actual concrete symbols

which are available and valuable for that great purpose in a particular generation and age.

The late M. Loisy, the excommunicated Catholic, declared that the most important thing which Jesus Christ did was to found a Church. An authoritative Church Jesus did not found, and there is no evidence in any authentic statement of his that he ever contemplated such a thing. But as a matter of fact he did gather round him a body of disciples—learners, pupils—who were not merely disciples but helpers in that task of preaching the good news, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, to which he devoted his own life on earth. Just as a pure mountain spring may be the source of a broadly flowing, tumultuous, and troubled river, fed by tributaries from many lands, so the little society which Christ did actually found has grown and developed into the Christian Church.

When the historian examines the actual means by which the Catholic Church made its way in the world and became the great organized institution which it actually did become, he finds that these means were very different from what the authorities of the Church affirmed and intended them to be. After shedding the husk of Messianism, which protected its earliest infancy, the Church adopted a mythology, an organization, and a mode of worship from the Graeco-Roman world which it was to conquer. Its dogmas,

promulgated as absolute and final truths, became means by which the religious idea, embodied in the Church, entered into the social life of the peoples, who adopted readily a system of myths, ceremonies, and sacraments not essentially different from those with which they were already familiar. The dogma and ritual of the Church actually *worked*, and for two principal reasons. In the first place, so far as men's experience went, it brought their minds into right relations with the Divine; and in the second place, it was fully abreast of, and able to assimilate, the best knowledge of the time. This was true in the fourth and fifth centuries and again in the thirteenth century. Is there any reason why it should not be true in the twentieth century?

Our soundest and best knowledge, in the twentieth century, is very different from what was soundest and best in the fourth or the fifth or the thirteenth century. Its superiority is indeed only relative; future ages will regard our science as we regard that of Origen or Aquinas. But it is idle for the Church to-day to sound the note of the Absolute and the Eternal through her dogmas, her ordinances, her ritual. Her claim can no longer be a command, whose sanction is eternal. It is an appeal whose sanction lies in its working power.

Let the Churches make us feel that they are able and willing to assimilate the historical and scientific knowledge which our age has won,

and that they have the courage to do so. Let the Churches make us feel that they embody a religious principle which is capable of entering into the social life of the the peoples to-day, because it is kindred to their own deep human instincts and aspirations but capable of raising these to a higher level. Let the Churches make us feel that their ministrations and their ritual can so symbolize spiritual and vital realities as to bring us into truer and more fruitful relations with God. This threefold task is at once the awful burden of the Church and her glorious privilege. It points to an ideal, but not an ideal out of relation with the actual world. The Fathers spoke of the "invisible" and the "visible" Church, and inquired into their relationship. The ideal Church is neither visible nor invisible. In the striking language of the Westminster Confession, it is *more or less visible*. Hence we are obliged to speak of *the Church* as well as of *the Churches*. Every one of the organized visible concrete corporations, called Churches, is a very imperfect realization of the true ideal of the Church; but the more any actual Church realizes this ideal, the more it is a branch of the true Church, which is the city of God.

An ancient legend tells of a city overwhelmed and cast down into the depths of the sea. And as the waves rolled far above its topmost towers, currents and motions would find their way down in the deep and ring the city's bells.

And through the sound of the storm on the surface of the sea might be heard the stifled ringing of the buried bells. Even so, buried in the depths of our human life, lies the true city of God, whose Temple we are. And through all the discordant clash of competing claims in the world of to-day, and the confusion caused by the changing bases of belief, we sometimes seem to hear the far-away, low, penetrating music of the bells beneath—the bells of the city of God. And because we hear them we know that a time shall come when that city shall rise and be seen by the eyes of men. Thus do all our nobler impulses and inspirations join as it were in a world-wide harmony in prophetic anticipation of the day when the spiritual oneness of man shall be a real experience of life, in God the Eternal Home.

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